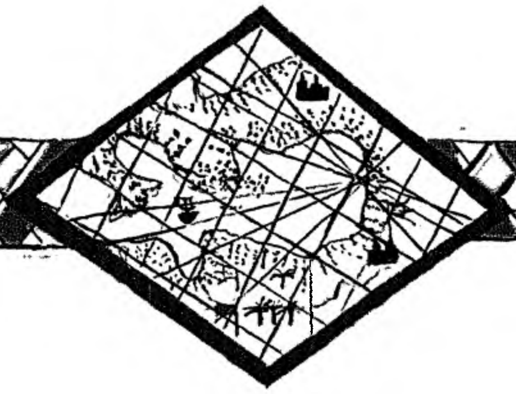


# A MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETY

*The Jewish Communities of the World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*

VOLUME I:

## Economic Foundations

S. D. Goitein

# A MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETY

PUBLISHED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE

NEAR EASTERN CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

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S. D. GOITEIN

# *A Mediterranean Society*

THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES OF THE ARAB WORLD AS PORTRAYED IN THE DOCUMENTS OF THE CAIRO GENIZA

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VOLUME I

## *Economic Foundations*

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*to Theresa*

"Mine and yours is hers"

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# *Preface*

A LITTLE-KNOWN but fairly representative section of the medieval world is portrayed in this book with the aid of a unique historical source, the documents of the Cairo Geniza (pronounced gheneeza). Here, middle-class people from the tenth through the thirteenth centuries have left us their letters, court records, contracts, accounts, and other writings in a haphazard selection, as they deposited them in a geniza, or lumber room. For these people believed that writings on which the name of God might be found should not be destroyed, but should be buried like the human body. In this way, quite unintentionally, many thousands of documents of the most variegated and often of very intimate character have been preserved. This material is invaluable for the knowledge of social groups to which the historian up till now has had little or no access.

Most of these documents, which were unearthed in Old Cairo and now are found in many libraries all over the world, are written in Hebrew characters and in the Arabic language. In general, they emanate from Jews who lived in the Islamic countries of the Mediterranean, which at the beginning of the Geniza period included most of Spain and Sicily. Thus, these papers form a first-rate source for the social history of the Jewish community on the one hand and of Islamic civilization on the other. Since many of them concern international trade, they are also of significance for the history of the Mediterranean basin in general.

The idea of this book was first conceived by me on September 17, 1954, while in Oxford, searching the treasures of the Bodleian Library for Geniza documents relating to the India trade for a book still in preparation on that subject. (Then I had a fancy title for it: "Living Parchments.") On June 15, 1955, I wrote about my intention to publish a volume of this character to Clemens Heller of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (VI$^e$ section), Paris, who had done much to further the preparation of the book about the India trade. Being occupied with the collection, deciphering, copying, and interpretation of the India papers, I made little progress with the new project. The turning point came in summer, 1958, this time while I was on one of my fifteen visits to the University Library, Cambridge, England, the Mecca of Geniza studies. By that time, it had become evident to me that the India trade, as far as

reflected in the Geniza, was carried out largely by merchants who had their base in the Mediterranean area. I felt that it was necessary to elucidate first the institutions and ways of life of the native countries of those enterprising men before their specific contributions to the commerce with India could be properly assessed. At the same time, while I was still in Cambridge, there arrived a letter from Dr. G. E. von Grunebaum, dated August 18, 1958, suggesting that I participate in the new publication program undertaken jointly by the Near Eastern Center of the University of California and the University of California Press. This decided the matter. I was off India and on the Mediterranean.

Both Dr. von Grunebaum and I assumed that with the general knowledge of the Geniza world acquired by me during ten years of research I would be able to produce a concise but all-around account of it. I tried for six months. Slowly it dawned upon me that it was risky to write a summary of something the totality of which was yet very incompletely known. Too many Geniza documents had never been read by anyone, and the great surprises often provided by newly deciphered documents made one hesitant to draw conclusions from manuscripts read on material still untouched. Thus, there ripened the bold resolution first to make a survey of the documentary Geniza in toto. I tried to read, albeit cursorily, the whole body of manuscripts of nonliterary character from the Cairo Geniza which are preserved in the libraries of Europe, the United States, and Israel, to card-index the more significant and especially the more difficult ones (so far as this had not been done by others), and to extract from them whatever information seemed likely to contribute to the portrait of the society depicted in them. After seven years, with a visit to the libraries of Leningrad in summer, 1965, the survey came to a preliminary conclusion. Preliminary, for I do not claim, by any means, to have succeeded in seeing all the relevant manuscripts or to have noted everything of significance. But I do hope that this study, to comprise three volumes, represents a fairly complete *inventory* of the Geniza, I mean, that it conveys an idea of the topics and types of information to be found in the Geniza documents.

This study is called *A Mediterranean Society* because the people described in it are to a certain extent representative of their class in the Mediterranean world in general, and its Arabic section in particular. Parallels and contrasts with sources outside the Geniza are pointed out occasionally. An attempt to do so throughout would have increased the size of the work to impossible dimensions.

It is perhaps not superfluous to remark that I regard my work as that of historian and philologist, not that of expounder of socioeconomic or political theories. When I found that free enterprise, a monetary economy, and fluid forms of cooperation were conducive to the comparatively salutary state of the Geniza period (as opposed to the preceding and, especially, the following periods), I do not intend to express herein

an opinion about the absolute value of these phenomena. The same applies to questions of religion, law, morals, and manners touched upon in the subsequent volumes.

The text of this study is organized in such a way that the reader who is interested in some technical details, or in the linguistic aspects of the documents quoted, or who wants to check a manuscript or a text previously edited, may consult the Notes at the end of the book where they do not interrupt the readers who have no need for them. The contents of volumes II and III are herein provided in outline. The Author's Note answers questions that might arise in connection with unfamiliar terms, the spelling of Arabic and Hebrew words, and the use of the Notes. Appendixes A and B contain concise information on dates, names, coins, weights, and measures. Appendixes C and D on industrial partnerships and the exchange rate of money complement chapters ii, 2, and iii, F, respectively.

A bibliography is not included. Since the three volumes touch on almost every aspect of the life of a middle class, a list of the books and articles used in their preparation might well fill a fourth. The list of Abbreviations and Symbols gives a general idea of the main reference books and journals used, while the Notes provide additional bibliographic information for individual sections.

Concurrently with this work a companion volume, called *Mediterranean People,* is being prepared, which contains translations of many of the Geniza texts discussed here. In the Notes an asterisk after the shelf mark of a manuscript cited means that its translation is included in that collection. It is hoped that the publication of *Mediterranean People* will follow close behind that of Volume II of this work.

A work of the character described could not have been carried out without generous help from many different quarters. I am deeply indebted to H. R. Creswick, Librarian, University Library, Cambridge, England, who showed much personal interest in the Geniza treasures entrusted to his care, and to his staff, in particular Dr. S. A. Skilliter, who worked in the library when the New Series of the Taylor-Schechter Collection was started (see p. 4); to the former and present presidents and librarians of Westminster College, Cambridge; to Bodley's Librarian and the staff of the Bodleian Library, Oxford; to the former and present Keeper, Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts, as well as to the present Assistant Keeper at the British Museum; to the Director and staff of the John Rylands Library, Manchester; to the *Conservateur honoraire* and Librarian of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, Paris; to the Director, Universitätsbibliothek, Heidelberg; to the Director and Restaurator of the Papyrus-sammlung, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna; to Professor Samuel Löwinger, former director of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Budapest, and to Professor Alexander Scheiber, present director, who spared no effort in providing me with photostats from the David Kaufmann Collection

preserved at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and helped me in other ways; to Professor N. Pigulevskaya, director of the Near Eastern department, and to Professor C. Starkova who heads the Hebrew section of the Institut Narodov Azii (Institute of the Peoples of Asia), Leningrad, for the use of the manuscripts under their care and for many other kindnesses; to the Director, Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library, Leningrad, and Librarian Victor Lebedev; to the administration and staff of the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem, Israel; to the former and present librarians and the staff of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York; to Professor Richard Ettinghausen of the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, for providing me with photographs and precious bibliographical and other advice; to the President and Library staff of the Dropsie College, Philadelphia; and, last but not least, to the staff of the University Museum and the Van Pelt and Fine Arts libraries of the University of Pennsylvania for manyfold help.

My first three visits to the libraries of Europe were financed by teaching in various summer schools there, with my spare time and money going to Geniza research. This wasteful procedure (which, though, was not wanting in interesting experiences) was eventually replaced by financial assistance granted to me. Besides the two universities in which I taught successively, the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and the University of Pennsylvania, both of which let me benefit from time to time from their schemes for the advancement of research, these institutions, foundations, societies, and private citizens have greatly obliged me by their understanding and generosity: Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation; American Philosophical Society; École Pratique des Hautes Études, VI$^e$ section, Division des Aires Culturelles (formerly Centre de Recherches Historiques); Israel Academy of Sciences; John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation; Lucius N. Littauer Foundation; Siegfried and Irma Ullmann Foundation: Philipp Brothers Foundation; Social Science Research Council; my friends, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Levy of London; Jacob I. Rosenbaum and Lionel C. Rosenbaum, both of Cleveland, Ohio, and the late Emil Weitzner of New York.

The documents discussed in this book touch on many problems not met with by me in my previous scientific work. While editing Geniza texts and trying to interpret them I had to make myself familiar with new fields of research. In this endeavor I was assisted by colleagues near and far. I learned from many, including some much younger in years. Here I can express my thanks only to those whose erudition and helpfulness benefited this volume directly. D. H. Baneth, Professor Emeritus of Arabic, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, is my master in Geniza philology. I do not regard the edition of a text edited by me as definitive until I have received his criticism. Professor Robert S. Lopez, Yale, guided my first steps in the field of medieval economic history.

Dr. George C. Miles, Chief Curator of the American Numismatic Society, by patiently answering my queries and providing me with material, introduced me to Islamic numismatics, a field in which I learned much also from Professor Paul Balog of Rome. Dr. Joachim O. Ronall, economist with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and member of the faculty of the New School for Social Research, helped me with the history of banking and cognate subjects. Professors Joseph Schacht, Columbia University, Franz Rosenthal, Yale University, Claude Cahen, University of Paris, and S. M. Stern, Oxford University, enlightened me on diverse subjects of Islamic studies. On Egyptian *realia* I learned much from Professor Ahmad Fakhri, University of Cairo, the eminent archaeologist, and from a younger scholar from the same university, Professor Muhammad El-Garh. Professor Saul Lieberman, Rector, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, despite his many preoccupations, let hardly a week pass before answering the queries I frequently submitted to him on questions of rabbinical law and literature. Professors S. Spiegel and M. Margalioth of the same institution, as well as Professors J. Schirmann and S. Abramson, Hebrew University, and Dr. N. Alloni of Jerusalem provided me with information concerning their work at the Taylor-Schechter Collection, Cambridge University, and other subjects. Professors N. Golb, University of Chicago, and A. Udovitch, Cornell University, read parts of the manuscript of this volume and made valuable suggestions. Of the galaxy of young men who worked as my scientific assistants I must mention three: Dr. Shaul Shaked, the author of the indispensable Geniza bibliography (see Abbreviations and Symbols); Dr. L. A. Motzkin, whose Ph.D. dissertation, "The Arabic Correspondence of Judge Elijah and his Family: A Chapter in the Social History of Thirteenth Century Egypt" (University of Pennsylvania, 1965) is based on Geniza documents; and Dr. Aaron Shaffer, today an Assyriologist, who was full of fruitful ideas when studying Arabic with me and who assisted me during an early period of the writing of this work.

Like medieval authors I feel inclined to conclude my preface with the cry of despair of the psalmist (19:13): "Who can be aware of errors; guard me from hidden mistakes." This volume is based on more than six thousand passages from manuscripts often difficult to read. Despite all the efforts made in checking numbers and other details, I am not satisfied that I have succeeded everywhere. Any criticism or information about inaccuracies is welcome.

To finally conclude on a more optimistic note: I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to Mrs. Terry Joseph, the guardian angel who watched over the preparation of the manuscript for the press, as well as to August Frugé and James Kubeck of the University of California Press for their most encouraging cooperation.

*January, 1967* S. D. G.

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# Contents

# *Contents of Volumes I through VI*



NOTE: The title originally planned for Chapter X, *The Mediterranean Mind*, was relinquished to avoid the erroneous impression that the personality emerging from the Geniza documents is regarded as representative of a hypothetical human type common to the Mediterranean area.

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# *Author's Note*

TECHNICAL LANGUAGE has been avoided throughout. The meaning of a few unfamiliar terms, such as Nagid (the head of the Jewish community of Egypt, pronounced nagheed) or dirhem (a silver coin), can be established easily with the help of the General Index. Most of the dynasties and rulers mentioned are described in the Historical Survey, pp. 29–42, or are otherwise presented to the reader.

The term High Middle Ages is understood here as more or less coinciding with the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods (969–1250), as opposed to the Late Middle Ages, beginning around 1250.

Present-day Spain, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Lebanon, Syria, and so on, were not in existence as political units during the period covered in this book. These and similar place-names are used as geographical terms defining the territories occupied by those states in our time.

It was difficult to find an English equivalent for Arabic *shaykh* and Hebrew *zāqēn* as used in the Geniza papers. Literally they mean "old man," but, preceding or following a name, they were the equivalent of our Mr., with the important qualification that the title normally was reserved for a respected person (see pp. 91, 132, and 152). It is rendered here as "the elder." Another common word hard to translate is *ʿaṭṭār,* "perfumer," sometimes rendered also as "druggist." His store, in which he carried culinary, cosmetic, and medical herbs, spices, and preparations is called here "store of drugs" because "drugstore" would be misleading.

Quotations from the Bible are translated as they were understood by the writers of the letters in which they occur (evident in the context, or known through the general usage of the Geniza period).

Biblical names that appear in the document referred to in Hebrew are spelled in the accepted English way, such as Abraham, Jacob, Moses. They are transcribed phonetically when the original has an Arabic form, such as Ibrāhīm, Ibrahīm, Barhūn, all standing for Abraham, Yaʿqūb for Jacob, Mūsā for Moses. In the case of rarer biblical names, where there exists no consensus concerning the English spelling, the one nearer to the Hebrew original is adopted.

In frequently recurring Arabic names, the diacritical marks used to denote their exact pronunciation have been omitted: Fatimids,

Ayyubids, Fustat, for Fāṭimids, Ayyūbids, al-Fusṭāṭ. In the latter case, as in that of al-Qayrawān, the article also has been dropped.

The transcription of Arabic names and words follows the system adopted in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* second edition, with the exception that *dj* is replaced by *j,* and *ḳ* by *q.*

For the transcription of Hebrew words a simple, standardized system has been adopted. Aiming at phonetical exactness would have been chimerical since we do not know precisely how the writers of the Geniza letters pronounced the Hebrew words and phrases they inserted in their speech. The words Kohen and Levi are printed without bars designating the length of their vowels, and Levi is spelled with *v* also when referring to the tribe called by that name.

The Arabic or Hebrew word for "son," when ocurring between the name of a person and that of his father, is always abbreviated as b. (pronounced *(i)bn* in Arabic and *ben* in Hebrew). When introducing a family name, the little word is invariably rendered with *Ibn,* although the manuscripts more often than not write *bn,* and not *'bn.*

Concerning the Notes: All the reader needs for the understanding of the references to the manuscripts used is contained in the Abbreviations and Symbols. One additional remark: Murad Michael's collection of the papers of *Nahray* (see Abbreviations and Symbols) is quoted even in cases where, at the time of the preparation of this volume, Michael had not yet copied the document concerned, and a copy made by myself was used. Everywhere, the original manuscripts have been consulted. After Michael had completed his work, I discovered that a great many accounts and some other papers in the Geniza were in the handwriting of Nahray. This material is not quoted with the mark *Nahray* since it is not included in that collection.

As for the Arabic texts cited in the Notes, the reader is reminded that their authors did not speak classical Arabic, but Middle Arabic, a language in many respects cognate to the modern vernaculars (see p. 15). Forms like *ibn abū,* which constitute horrible blunders according to classical grammar, were perfectly regular in the speech of the eleventh century. In some exceptional cases, for reasons of clarity, the classical final endings have been provided, although they were certainly dropped in actual speech. For the same reason, the *l* of the article has been retained throughout even when preceding the so-called sun letters (*al-si'r,* not *as-si'r*). Both hamza and alif waṣla are expressed by the sign '.

# *Abbreviations and Symbols*

Jubilee, presentation, and memorial volumes are cited under the name of the scholar honored; for example, *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A. R. Gibb*, ed. George Makdisi (Leiden, 1965) is cited as *H. A. R. Gibb Presentation Volume* (Leiden, 1965).

A plus sign after the shelf mark of a Geniza MS means that the document has been edited and published or is included in S. D. Goitein's *India Book* or M. Michael's *Nahray* (see below, *s.v. India Book* and *Nahray*). Publication data on the edition or the serial number of the document in *India Book* or *Nahray* is provided at the first appearance of the relevant shelf mark, for which the Index of Geniza Texts is to be consulted.

An asterisk after the shelf mark of a MS means that the document is translated in S. D. Goitein, *Mediterranean People* (see Preface, p. ix, and below, *s.v. Med. People*). *Med. People* will include an index of texts arranged by shelf mark.

| | |
|---|---|
| Abraham Maimuni, *Responsa* | Abraham Maimuni, *Responsa,* ed. A. H. Freimann, trans. S. D. Goitein. Jerusalem, 1937. Arabic and Hebrew. |
| AIU | Alliance Israélite Universelle, Paris. The Geniza manuscripts in this library belong to the Consistoire Israélite and are sometimes cited under that name. |
| Amari, *Musulmani di Sicilia* | Michele Amari, *Storia dei Musulmani di Sicilia. Catania,* 1933–1939. 3 vols. |
| Antonin | Antonin Collection, Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library, Leningrad. |
| Ashtor, *Jews in Muslim Spain* | E. Ashtor, *A History of the Jews in Muslim Spain.* Vols. I, II. Jerusalem, 1960–1966. Hebrew. |
| Assaf, *Texts* | Simha Assaf, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History.* Jerusalem, 1946. Arabic and Hebrew. |
| b. | Son or daughter of (Hebrew and Arabic). |

| | |
|---|---|
| Balog, "History of the Dirhem" | Paul Balog, "History of the Dirhem in Egypt from the Fāṭimid Conquest until the Collapse of the Mamlūk empire," *Revue Numismatique,* 6ᵉ sér. 3 (1961), 109–146. |
| Baron, *History of the Jews* | S. W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews.* New York, 1952–1965. 10 vols. and index. |
| Beaussier, *Dictionnaire* | M. Beaussier, *Dictionnaire pratique arabe-français.* Algiers, 1958. |
| BM | British Museum, London. |
| Bodl. | Bodleian Library, Oxford, England. This material is cited in three ways.<br>1. The shelf mark of the manuscript followed by its number in A. Neubauer and A. E. Cowley, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford, 1906), and by the folio of the document under discussion:<br>Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 38<br>2. Where the folio of the shelf mark and the number of the unit described in the *Catalogue* are not identical, the latter too is included:<br>Bodl. MS Heb. b 3, f. 21 (Cat. 2806, no. 19)<br>3. There are cases where a manuscript is not listed in the *Catalogue:*<br>Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 64 |
| Braslavsky, *Our Country* | Joseph Braslavsky, *Studies in Our Country: Its Past and Remains.* Tel Aviv, 1954. Hebrew. |
| Brockelmann, *GAL* | Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur.* 2d ed. Leiden, 1945–1949. 2 vols. Three supplementary volumes, Leiden, 1937–1942. |
| BSOAS | *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.* |
| *Cambridge Economic History* | *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe.* Vols. II, III, general editors M. M. Postan and H. J. Habakkuk. London: Cambridge University Press, 1952–1963. |
| Casanova, *Reconstitution* | Paul Casanova, *Essai de reconstitution topographique de la ville d'al Fousṭâṭ ou Miṣr.* Mémoires de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, tome 35. Cairo, 1913–1919. 3 vols. |
| Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte* | Gustaf Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina.* Vols. I–VII. Gütersloh, 1928–1942. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Dimashqī | al-Dimashqi, *al-Ishāra ilā maḥāsin al-tijāra*. Cairo, 1900–1901. |
| DK | David Kaufmann Collection, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest. One series bears Arabic numerals, and another Roman numerals. A few documents in the collection belonging to neither series, which I have described in *Epstein Jubilee Volume* (see below, *s.v.*), pp. 191–204, are cited in Arabic numerals within parentheses. |
| Dozy, *Supplément* | R. Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*. Paris, 1927. 2 vols. |
| Dropsie | Geniza manuscripts preserved in the library of Dropsie College, Philadelphia. |
| *EI* | *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. 1st ed. |
| *EI*[2] | *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. 2d ed. |
| ENA | Elkan N. Adler Collection, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York. |
| *Epstein Jubilee Volume* | *J. N. Epstein Jubilee Volume*, ed. S. Assaf *et al*. Jerusalem, 1950. Hebrew. |
| *Eretz-Israel* | *Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical, and Geographical Studies*. Jerusalem 1951——. Hebrew, with English summaries; some volumes have sections in European languages. |
| f., fs. | folio(s); fragments(s) |
| Fahmy, *Muslim Sea-power* | Aly Mohamed Fahmy, *Muslim Sea-power in the Eastern Mediterranean, from the Seventh to the Tenth Century, A.D.* London, 1950. |
| Firkovitch | Firkovitch Collection, Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library, Leningrad. |
| Fischel, *Jews* | Walter J. Fischel, *Jews in the Economic and Political Life of Mediaeval Islam*. London, 1937. |
| Goitein, *Education* | S. D. Goitein, *Jewish Education in Muslim Countries: New Sources from the Geniza*. Jerusalem, 1962. Hebrew. |
| Goitein, *Jemenica* | S. D. Goitein, *Jemenica: Sprichwörter und Redensarten aus Zentral-Jemen*. Leipzig, 1934. |
| Goitein, *Jews and Arabs* | S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts through the Ages*. New York, 1964. |
| Goitein, "Social Services" | "The Social Services of the Jewish Com- |

munity as Reflected in the Cairo Geniza Records," *Jewish Social Studies*, 26 (1964), 3–22, 67–86.

Goitein, *Studies* — S. D. Goitein, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*. Leiden, 1966.

Gottheil-Worrell — *Fragments from the Cairo Genizah in the Freer Collection*, ed. R. Gottheil and W. H. Worrell. New York, 1927.

Grohmann, *APEL* — Adolf Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri in the Egyptian Library*. Vols. I-VI. Cairo, 1934–1962.

Grohmann, *Einführung* — Adolf Grohmann, *Einführung und Chrestomathie zur arabischen Papyruskunde*. Vol. I. Prague, 1954.

Grohmann, *World of Arabic Papyri* — Adolf Grohmann, *From the World of Arabic Papyri*. Cairo, 1952.

Hazard, *Numismatic History of North Africa* — Harry W. Hazard, *The Numismatic History of Late Medieval North Africa*. American Numismatic Society. Numismatic Studies no. 8. New York, 1952.

Heyd, *Commerce du Levant* — W. Heyd, *Histoire du commerce du Levant au moyen-âge*. Amsterdam, 1959. 2 vols.

Hinz, *Masse* — W. Hinz, *Islamische Masse und Gewichte*. Leiden, 1955.

*HUCA* — *Hebrew Union College Annual*

Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa — Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn al-anbāʾ fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbāʾ*, ed. August Müller. Königsberg, 1884.

Ibn Duqmāq — Ibn Duqmāq, *Kitāb al-intiṣār li-wāsiṭat ʿiqd al-amṣār*. Vols. IV, V. Bulaq, A.H. 1309–1310.

Ibn Jubayr — *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, ed. W. Wright, rev. M. J. de Goeje. E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series V. Leiden, 1907.

Ibn Muyassar — Ibn Muyassar, *Annales d'Égypte*, ed. Henri Massé. Cairo, 1919.

Idris, *Zirides* — H. R. Idris, *La Berberie orientale sous les Zīrīdes, Xe-XIIe siècles*. Paris, 1962.

INA D-55 — Institut Narodov Azii, Russian Academy of Sciences, Leingrad. The file D-55 contains all the Geniza documents preserved in that institute.

*India Book* — A collection of 332 Geniza documents on the India trade being prepared by S. D. Goitein for publication.

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|---|---|
| *JA* | *Journal Asiatique* |
| *JAOS* | *Journal of the American Oriental Society* |
| *JESHO* | *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* |
| JNUL | Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem, Israel. MS 4° 577, 3. This file contains all the Geniza documents preserved in that library. |
| *JQR* | *Jewish Quarterly Review* |
| *JRAS* | *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* |
| *JSS* | *Jewish Social Studies* |
| JTS Geniza Misc. | Geniza fragments in the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, of undefined provenance. See ENA. |
| *Kirjath Sepher* | *Kirjath Sepher: Bibliographical Quarterly of the Jewish National and University Library,* Jerusalem. Hebrew. |
| Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie* | S. Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie.* Leipzig, 1910–1912. 3 vols. |
| Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* | E. W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon.* Vols. I-VIII. London, 1863–1886. |
| Lane, *Modern Egyptians* | E. W. Lane, *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians.* Everyman's Library 315. London, 1936. |
| Lane-Pool, *History of Egypt* | Stanley Lane-Pool, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages.* London, 1914. |
| *Lĕšonénu* | *Lĕšonénu: A Journal for the Study of the Hebrew Language and Cognate Subjects.* Jerusalem. Hebrew, with English summaries. |
| Le Strange, *Eastern Caliphate* | G. Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate.* Cambridge, 1905. |
| Lopez-Raymond, *Medieval Trade* | Robert S. Lopez and Irving W. Raymond, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World.* New York, 1955. |
| *Ma'ālim al-Qurba* | *The Ma'ālim al-Qurba,* ed. Reuben Levy. E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series, n.s. XII. London, 1938. |
| Maimonides-Meyerhof | *Un glossaire de matière médicale composé par Maïmonide,* ed. Max Meyerhof. Cairo, 1940. |
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| *Med. Soc.* | S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society.* The second and third volumes of this work, now in preparation. |
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| Mez, *Renaissance* | A. Mez, *Die Renaissance des Islams.* Heidelberg, 1922. In order to enable students using the English, French, Spanish, or Arabic translations to find the passage quoted, the number of the chapter is included. |
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| Muqaddasi | al-Muqaddasi, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm.* Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, ed. M. J. de Goeje. Vol. III. Leiden, 1877 (2d ed., 1906). |
| Nābulusī, *Lumaʿ* | al-Nābulusī, *Kitāb Lumaʿ al-Qawānīn,* ed. Claude Cahen. Bulletin d'Études Orientales de l'Institut Français de Damas, 16 (1958–1960), 110–134 (1*–78*, Arabic text). |
| *Nahray* | A collection of 261 Geniza documents connected with Nahray b. Nissīm (a Qayrawān merchant who settled in Egypt) being edited by Murad Michael. In preparation. See Author's Note, p. xviii. |
| *PAAJR* | *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* |
| PER | Papyrus-sammlung Erzherzog Rainer, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, Austria. |
| P. Heid. | Papyrus-sammlung der Universität Heidelberg; see also PSR. |

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| PSR | Papyri Schott-Reinhardt, Universität Heidelberg; see also P. Heid. |
| *REJ* | *Revue des Études Juives* |
| Sapori, *Le Marchand Italien* | A. Sapori, *Le Marchand italien au moyen-âge*. Paris, 1952. |
| Sassoon | David S. Sassoon Collection, Letchworth, England. |
| Sauvaget-Cahen | C. Cahen. *Jean Sauvaget's Introduction to the History of the Muslim East: A Bibliographical Guide*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965. |
| Sauvaire | M. H. Sauvaire, *Matériaux pour servir a l'histoire de la numismatique et de la metrologie musulmanes: Extrait du Journal Asiatique*. Paris, 1882. |
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| Spiro, *Dictionary of Modern Arabic* | S. Spiro Bey, *Arabic-English Dictionary of the Modern Arabic of Egypt*. Cairo, 1923. |
| Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary* | F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*. London, 1947. |
| Strauss, *Mamluks* | E. Strauss, *A History of the Jews in Egypt under the Rule of the Mamluks*. Jerusalem. Vol. I, 1944, Vol. II, 1951. Hebrew. |
| *Tarbiz* | *Tarbiz. A Quarterly for Jewish Studies* Hebrew, with summaries in English. |

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| Toledano | Three manuscripts in the possession of J. M. Toledano and edited by him in *Mizraḥ u-Ma'arav*, 1 (1920), 344–350. Hebrew. |
| TS | Taylor-Schechter Collection, University Library, Cambridge, England. The collection is kept in glasses, in bound volumes, and in boxes.<br>1. No. 251 of the series of glasses 12 inches long:<br>TS 12.251<br>2. Folio 7 in volume 12 of the series of volumes 10 inches long:<br>TS 10 J 12, f. 7<br>3. Boxes are marked either with Arabic numbers or with letters (G, J, K, and so on), or with the words "Arabic" or "Loan" (originally lent by the library to Solomon Schechter for study while he was in the United States).<br>4. NS designates new series. It is followed by the number of the box and the folio.<br>5. NS J designates boxes of the new series which contain documents exclusively and which bear no numbers. Only the folio is cited. |
| ULC | University Library, Cambridge, England. Collections of Geniza material in the library other than the Taylor-Schechter Collection. |
| Wahrmund, *Handwörterbuch* | A. Wahrmund, *Handwörterbuch der neuarabischen und deutschen Sprache*. Giessen, 1898. 2 vols. |
| Westminster College | Westminster College, Cambridge, England. |
| Worman, *JQR*, 18 (1905) | E. J. Worman, "Notes on the Jews in Fustat," *JQR*, 18 (1905), 1–39. |
| Yāqūt | *Jacut's Geographisches Wörterbuch*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld. Vols. I–IV. Leipzig, 1866–1870. |
| *ZDMG* | *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* |
| *ZfHB* | *Zeitschrift für Hebräische Bibliographie* |

# A MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETY



Rosetta
Alexandria
Lake Maryūṭ
BUHAYRA
Fuwwa
SHARQIYYA
Ibwān
Damietta
Tinnīs
Ascalon
Gaza
al-ʿArīsh
al-Muṭaylib
al-Mahalla
Sammanūd
Damsīs
Sunbāṭ
Minyat Zifta
Minyat Ghamr
Malīj
Ṭaṭay
M. Sirāj
Manūf
Benhā
Bilbays
al-Ashmūn
Qalyūb
Shaṭṭanawf
Cairo
Fustat
Gizeh
Dammūh
EGYPT
Qulzum (Suez)
SINAI
Minyat al-Qāʾid
Madīnat al-Fayyūm
Būṣīr
Būsh
Dandīr(?)
GULF OF SUEZ
GULF OF AQABA
Dahrūṭ
al-Bahnasā
al-Ashmūnayn
RED SEA
Asyūṭ
R. NILE
Akhmīm
Qūṣ
Luxor
To Aswān and ʿAydhāb

# Introduction

## *The Cairo Geniza Documents as a Source of Mediterranean Social History*

*Their discovery and transfer to libraries in Europe and America.*— Students of the history of the Mediterranean countries during the Middle Ages have often complained about the almost complete absence of archives in Muslim countries. In Europe, the church, feudal lords, cities, and guilds kept their documents as titles of right and for other purposes. Nothing of the kind is to be found in Muslim countries in that period.[1] It is possible now, to reconstruct the main lines of political history and, to a certain extent, also the life of the ruling class with the help of literary sources, supplemented by the study of extant buildings, utensils, inscriptions, and coins. But social and economic history, especially of the middle and lower classes, can hardly be studied without the aid of documents such as letters, deeds, or accounts that actually emanated from people belonging to these classes.

Under these circumstances it is most fortunate that a great treasure of records, hailing from all over the Mediterranean countries, and mainly from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, has been preserved in the so-called Cairo Geniza. The Hebrew word *genīza* (pronounced gheneeza), like Arabic *janāza* (which means "burial"), is derived from the Persian. In Persian, *ganj* denotes a storehouse or a treasure, and the closest meaning of its biblical derivative, especially in Ezra 6:1, is archive. In medieval Hebrew, genīza, or rather *bēth genīza,* designates a repository of discarded writings. For just as the human body, having fulfilled its task as the container of the soul, should be buried, that is, preserved to await resurrection, thus writings bearing the name of God, after having served their purpose, should not be destroyed by fire or otherwise, but should be put aside in a special room designated for the purpose to await burial in a cemetery.

Similar beliefs were held by Muslims and medieval Christians,[2] but the Jews were more consistent in this matter, presumably because Hebrew was regarded as God's own language. Soon the notion of holiness was transferred from the language to the letters, and scrupu-

lous persons refrained from destroying anything written in Hebrew characters, even if the content was of a purely secular nature and even if the language used was other than Hebrew. There existed no uniform practice with regard to this; basically and generally, genizas were used for *shēmōth,* writings bearing, or supposed to bear, the name of God.

Genizas were found in many countries where Jews lived. For reasons that are discussed later, only one gained momentous importance for historical research, the Cairo Geniza, the main repository of which was a lumber room attached to a synagogue in Fustat, or, as it is called today, Old Cairo. Fustat was the capital of Muslim Egypt down to 969, when the Fatimids, after the conquest of that country, founded the town Cairo about two miles northeast of the former capital. During the whole of the Fatimid period (969–1171), Old Cairo remained the main city of Egypt and, even during the days of its decay and destruction, it was never entirely abandoned. The same was the case with the Geniza synagogue. Although its environment was mostly deserted, it never ceased to be a house of worship. In 1890, or perhaps the year before, the building was entirely renovated. During these operations, the roof of the Geniza chamber was torn down and its long concealed treasures laid bare.[3]

Even before this drastic change in the fortunes of the Geniza, some of the material preserved in it had been taken out, mainly, it seems, through the endeavors of the Jewish scholars in Jerusalem, one of whom had penetrated into the Geniza chamber as early as 1864 and given a detailed description of it in a book published two years later.[4] A particularly studious collector—and seller—of Geniza manuscripts was Rabbi Solomon A. Wertheimer of Jerusalem, who also published some of them in the 1890's, although in a somewhat unscientific way.

In 1890, when Egyptian antique dealers and European scholars visiting Egypt became aware of the newly discovered treasures of Hebrew manuscripts, large quantities of Geniza material began to flow into public and private libraries in Europe and America. Neither dealers nor scholars, although for different reasons, were eager to disclose their source. In the early nineties, when heaps of dilapidated manuscripts and many leaves of ancient documents piled up on the desks of the Bodleian Library in Oxford, largely purchased from the Rabbi Wertheimer mentioned above, professional discretion did not permit the librarian to tell interested scholars where they had originally come from. Thus, it was possible that the first, and one of the best, scientific publications of Geniza documents was made by a scholar who did not know of the existence of the Cairo Geniza. In 1894, Adalbert Merx published in his *Documents de paléographie hébraïque et arabe,* with beautiful reproductions, eleventh- and twelfth-century deeds from the Geniza, which he had purchased in Cairo from a dealer and which he believed had come from family archives.[5]

Fortunately, almost all the Geniza manuscripts that were acquired

in and shortly after 1891 by American collectors, mainly from Philadelphia, were entrusted by them to the custody of Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Studies in that city. They are still there and were described, although in a very preliminary way, in a printed catalogue.[6] A high dignitary of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Archimandrite Antonin, who had his seat in Jerusalem, purchased many valuable Geniza manuscripts of literary character and also some documents. His collection is preserved in the Saltykov-Shchedrin State Public Library of Leningrad. Another Russian, Arsenev, bought a number of Geniza documents in Jerusalem in 1896, some of which are of great interest. They are kept at present at the Institut Narodov Azii (Institute of the Peoples of Asia) in Leningrad.[7] David Kaufmann of Budapest, who was as great a collector as a scholar, early recognized the scientific importance of those ancient, although often fragmentary or otherwise damaged papers, and acquired a large quantity of them. After his death they were presented by his family to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.[8]

Unlike David Kaufmann, some prominent scholars had doubts about the value of the "Egyptian fragments," as the Geniza papers were called in the early nineties.[9] One of the doubters was the man, whose name, more than that of any one else, is connected with "the discovery" of the Cairo Geniza, Solomon Schechter, at that time Reader in Rabbinics at the University of Cambridge, England, and subsequently President of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York. The archives of the University Library, Cambridge, have preserved eloquent letters by Rabbi Wertheimer to Schechter, impatiently inquiring about the fate of the Egyptian manuscripts offered to him for sale and urging Schechter to send them on to Oxford if he was not keen on them. Schechter's little interest in the Geniza material at that time is vividly demonstrated by the fact that the Geniza papers actually acquired by the University Library in 1893–1894 were never even provisionally classified by him, but left in boxes in a state that cannot be much different from that in which they had arrived.[10]

The first European scholar who was granted direct access to the Geniza chamber was that indefatigable traveler and collector, Elkan N. Adler of London. After an unsuccessful attempt in 1888, he was permitted, in January, 1896, to search the room for several hours and to take with him whatever he liked. His collection is one of the most valuable in existence and forms today one of the treasures of the renowned library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York.[11]

In the same year, on March 13, 1896, there occurred that event which finally led to the liquidation of the Cairo Geniza, as far as manuscripts are concerned, and the wholesale transfer of its remaining contents to the University Library, Cambridge. On that day, two learned Scottish ladies showed Solomon Schechter some leaves from the

Cairo Geniza recently acquired by them, and Schechter recognized in one of them the Hebrew text of Ecclesiasticus, or *Book of Wisdom* by Ben Sira. This book was written about 200 B.C. in Hebrew, but the original had been lost and its content had been known only through Greek and other translations. This startling discovery electrified Schechter. If the Geniza contained one leaf in the original language of such an ancient book, it stood to reason that a systematic search would retrieve more of the same or of similar character. With the zeal of the newly converted, and encouraged by Adler's recent success, Schechter conceived the bold idea to save, with one stroke, the whole of the Cairo Geniza for scientific research. He was fortunate in finding an ardent supporter and Maecenas in Dr. Charles Taylor, Master of St. John's College in Cambridge, and, equipped with letters of recommendation to the Chief Rabbi and the President of the Jewish community in Cairo, he arrived there in December, 1896.[12]

Schechter's mission proved to be entirely successful. He had opportunity to search the Geniza not for hours, but for weeks, and he was able to transfer to Cambridge a hoard of manuscripts of fabulous dimensions. As far as documentary material is concerned, the University Library now possesses at least three times as much as all the other collections together. Thus Schechter's fame as the father of Geniza research is fully deserved. Later visitors to the Geniza chamber have confirmed that nothing but printed matter remained.[13]

The University Library has done much to make this so-called Taylor-Schechter Collection available to interested scholars. The papers were cleaned and otherwise treated and put between glasses or bound in volumes or arranged in boxes. Handlists briefly describing the contents were prepared for the glasses and one section of the volumes. These handlists were the work of the curator of Oriental manuscripts Ernest J. Worman, whose early death in 1909 was a great loss to Geniza research and seems to have brought to a premature end the urgent work of classification. In 1955, with the newly aroused interest in Geniza research, a New Series of the Taylor-Schechter Collection was started under the direction of Librarian H. R. Creswick. Out of the many tens of thousands of unclassified Geniza papers, the documentary material was selected by me and is now conveniently accessible in separate boxes. Some additional material of this type was assembled in the 1960's by Professor Norman Golb of the University of Chicago, a former student of mine. The far more numerous biblical and other literary texts were classified by library personnel, and, as far as expert work was involved, by a number of interested scholars, in particular Professors Jefim Schirmann, Sheraga Abramson, and Nehemia Alloni of Jerusalem, Shalom Spiegel and Moshe Zucker of New York, and Alexander Scheiber of Budapest.[14]

New Geniza material was unearthed in the Basātīn cemetery east of Old Cairo at the beginning of this century and was openly sold. In

1908, the comparatively small, but highly valuable collection of Geniza documents now in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, was acquired by Charles L. Freer in Gizeh, a suburb of Cairo. Nothing is known about the provenance of these papers, but it seems probable that they had come from that famous old cemetery. The same might be true of the Geniza papers in the possession of the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, which were purchased in Cairo in 1910.[15] During 1912 and 1913, more systematic searches were made in the Basātīn cemetery by Bernard Chapira of the Société des Études Juives of Paris assisted by Jacques Mosseri, the nephew of Joseph M. Cattawi Pasha, the President of the Jewish community in Cairo, who had already been so helpful to Solomon Schechter. Over 4,000 fragments were found, the majority of which, however, lie outside the scope of this book both as far as contents and periods of provenance are concerned. This material is generally referred to as the Mosseri Collection.[16]

The greatest of all collectors of oriental Hebrew manuscripts, the Karaite scholar Abraham Firkovitch (1786–1874), was reticent about the origin of the treasures which he brought together in many years of daring travels. Paul E. Kahle, who devoted a lifetime to the study of the manuscripts of the Bible and other ancient Hebrew literature found in the Firkovitch collections, was of the opinion that some of these manuscripts (which were sold to the Imperial, now Public State, Library of Leningrad) must have come from the Cairo Geniza. An examination of the documents from the eleventh through the fifteenth centuries preserved in those collections, carried out in the summer of 1965, convinced me that there could be no doubt concerning their provenance from that source.[17]

The history of the transfer of the Cairo Geniza to the libraries of Europe and America explains the scattered state of this material today. In addition to the five great collections in University Library, Cambridge, Bodleian Library, Oxford, the British Museum, London, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, and State Public Library, Leningrad, and in six medium-sized collections in Dropsie College, Philadelphia, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, Presbyterian Westminster College in Cambridge, England, Library of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, Paris, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, and National Library in Vienna, there exist at least nine others,[18] and some material is still in private hands. The valuable collection of the Municipal Library in Frankfort on the Main, Germany, was destroyed during World War II and not even handlists indicating its contents have survived.

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that pages of one and the same book, nay, fragments of one and the same document, should have been found in such distant places as Leningrad, Cambridge, and New York. There is little comfort in the fact that Greek as well as

Arabic papyrology are afflicted by similar handicaps.[19] The inconvenience of geographical dispersion is aggravated by the fact that only few collections have published catalogues, and those published are incomplete and insufficient for historical research. By far the most important bibliographical guide to Geniza documents is Volume II of the *Catalogue of Hebrew Manuscripts of the Bodleian Library,* Oxford, prepared mainly by A. E. Cowley and printed in 1906. Generations of scholars have based their Geniza studies on this volume. Still, when I began to collect Geniza material about the India trade, I found only one single pertinent detail indicated in the *Catalogue,* recognizable by the name of an Indian seaport registered in the Index. After years of search it appeared that the Bodleian collection of Geniza papers contained no fewer than thirty-five items referring to the subject. There was no way of establishing this other than actually examining all the manuscripts extant. If such a wasteful procedure was necessary with regard to a collection described by a competent librarian, it is easy to imagine what awaits a scholar in the many collections that provide no bibliographical guidance whatsoever.

Just as the manuscripts of the Geniza documents are not easily accessible because of their geographical dispersion and lack of adequate bibliographies, so is it extremely difficult to get hold of all the printed material. Most of the Geniza documents were published in scientific (and sometimes not so scientific) journals, many of which were discontinued years ago. For example, to whom would it occur to search *The Green Bag: An Entertaining Magazine of Lawyers* (Boston) for Geniza manuscripts? At the turn of the century, however, three of them were published there with facsimiles.[20] With the exception of a bill of divorce recently acquired by the Speer Library of the Princeton Theological Seminary, these manuscripts, as it appeared after examination, are preserved, at present, at Dropsie College, Philadelphia. The printed catalogue of the Geniza fragments in Philadelphia (cf. above, p. 3 n. 6), does not say a word about their publication in *The Green Bag,* and I too, became aware of this fact only after I had copied the manuscripts kept at Dropsie College and tried to understand them. Many Geniza records are buried in jubilee and memorial volumes or in books where nobody would suspect their existence. There are valuable publications in languages not widely known, such as Hungarian. Thus it has sometimes occurred that one and the same document was published by two different scholars each ignorant of the other's efforts.[21]

In order to put an end to this intolerable situation, a tentative bibliography of all published Geniza documents has been prepared by Dr. S. Shaked under the direction of Professor D. H. Baneth of Jerusalem and myself. Although this first trial perhaps may not have achieved completeness, it is hoped that, as far as published material is concerned, it will put historical Geniza research on firm ground.[22]

*Geniza* v. *archive.*—The nature of a Geniza hoard of manuscripts can best be illustrated by contrasting it with a type of collection of manuscripts, which for the historian fulfills a similar task of documentary evidence, namely an archive.

From the definition of the term Geniza given above it is evident that it is the very opposite of an archive. In an archive one keeps documents in order to use them, if and when necessary. Therefore, much care is taken to preserve them well, and, in many cases, they are deposited in the archive immediately after having been made out. The opposite was the case with the Geniza. Papers were thrown away there only after they had lost all value to their possessors and consequently in most cases only a long time after they had been written. Even family letters, let alone business correspondence, would not have been deposited in a place accessible to everyone except after having been deprived of all relevance to contemporaries. Legal deeds, which conferred rights on their holders, had to be kept by them and their heirs often for generations, before they could be disposed of in the Geniza chamber.

There was another good reason for keeping a document a long time before throwing it into the Geniza. Paper was expensive so that free space on a document was normally used for all sorts of purposes, such as drafts, short notes, accounts, or even merely for trying out a pen or for exercises. Thus MS TS 16.49 of the University Library, Cambridge, was drawn up in Fustat on April 26, 987. Although long and elaborate, it is just a release in which a widow confirmed to the family of her husband that she had received all that was due her according to her marriage contract. Thus, there was no particular need to keep this document for a very long time. Yet its reverse side was used for trials of the pen, one of which bears the date December 21, 1085, about a hundred years later than that of the original document.

Naturally, during the many years that elapsed from the execution of a document to its disposal, it deteriorated. The writing became faint, the paper was covered with dark-brown stains, it was damaged by holes, and often parts of it were torn away for various uses.

To be sure, many types of paper found in the Geniza, as well as the ink used on them, were of excellent quality, and the scribes of the courts, the clerks of business houses, as well as scholarly persons in general, mostly had a clear and often even a beautiful handwriting. MS TS 18 J 4, f. 18, represents a business letter sent from Aden in South Arabia to a port on the west coast of India. It was addressed to a Jewish merchant from Tunisia, who ran a bronze factory and did other business out in that distant country. The recipient, after having stayed many years in India, returned to Aden in the autumn of 1149, but remained there and in the interior of Yemen for another three years. Then, he had to make the long journey through the Red Sea, the terrible desert between it and the Nile River and, finally, on the Nile from Upper Egypt to Cairo. Despite the humidity of the climate of

India and of Aden and the hazards of the three journeys on sea and through the desert—and the more than eight hundred years that have elapsed since it was written—the letter is in perfect condition, with even the smallest dot and stroke clearly discernible.[23]

Unfortunately, such examples are the exception rather than the rule. Even in those Geniza papers that are more or less complete, the writing is often partly effaced, for example, by seawater, or otherwise damaged. Many Geniza papers are mere fragments, representing the beginning, middle, or end, or either side of a document. True, even small scraps of paper sometimes contain valuable information. Still, their incompleteness, often involving the loss of vital details concerning personalities, dates, and localities, is tantalizing and makes heavy demands on the memory and the synthesizing faculty of their student.

There is another difference between an archive and the Geniza which is a great obstacle to research. In an orderly archive, material of the same character is normally kept together in one place, which simplifies research on one topic. In the Geniza, everything is topsy-turvy. The dispersion and scrambling of the Geniza material caused by its transfer to the libraries of Europe and America did not create the total confusion in which it is found now, but only enhanced it. Today, even in the most carefully classified collections, those of the Bodleian Library in Oxford and certain sections of the Taylor-Schechter Collection in Cambridge, the most heterogeneous material is bound together in one volume. To cite just one example, in the comparatively small volume MS Heb. d 65 of the Bodleian, which contains only forty-four items, the subjects range from marriage contracts, bills of divorce, and legal deeds of the most diversified character to private and business correspondence and accounts, to end up with secular and religious poetry, one amulet, and a homily. The dates range from A.D. 956 to 1538, almost 600 years. The places, by chance, show less variety, but still comprise cities as distant from each other as Qayrawān in Tunisia and Damascus in Syria. If this is the condition of the Geniza material after its classification in a library, one can imagine its state of confusion in its original habitat. Solomon Schechter, who had actually seen it in that state, has preserved his impressions for posterity in a vivid and humorous description.[24]

This jumbling of the contents of the Geniza calls for comment, for there can be no doubt that Jewish families and communities kept archives.[25] Thus we find that the Geniza has preserved over 200 letters addressed to Nahray b. Nissīm, a prominent businessman, scholar, and community leader, who emigrated around 1045 from Tunisia to Old Cairo where he died fifty years later. A considerable number of other personalities and families are represented in the Geniza by so many papers that we are forced to assume that they were originally part of carefully kept collections. In business letters reference is made regularly to correspondence of preceding years and to account books. In

many cases, pages from record books of courts, referring to successive meetings during several years, such as 1027–1029, or 1097–1099, or from notebooks of judges covering prolonged periods, have been preserved. Why, then, were these collections torn asunder in the Geniza and mixed up with documents emanating from other persons, countries, and centuries and with literary texts of the most variegated character?

This chaos is to be explained, it seems, by the fact that the Geniza was in living use during the whole time of its existence. I remember having seen in one collection a bill of divorce made out in Bombay as late as 1879, and, as it is unlikely that a document of such character was disposed of in faraway Cairo immediately after the legal act attested by it, it is not impossible that it landed in the Geniza only a few days before Solomon Schechter arrived in Cairo ready to carry it off in its entirety.[26] The living use of the Geniza was expressed not only by the continuous addition to its contents, but also by the opposite process. Enterprising people took the trouble to get into the dark room, formerly in order to find an ancient prayer book, or even legal formularies, or mere scrap paper, but later in the nineteenth century their aim was to select manuscripts suitable for sale to Europeans and Americans hunting for antiquities. The result of all this was that all the contents of the Cairo Geniza were continuously and completely turned upside down. In this state they were transferred to the libraries in which they are deposited now, and, as far as papers of documentary character are concerned, much of the old disorder has remained.[27]

The students of Greek and Arabic papyrology and of other papyri unearthed in Egypt may be reminded of their own tribulations while reading those tabulated here. The difference is this: The Greek and other ancient documents, once covered with earth, normally remained undisturbed, while those buried in the Geniza were never left in peace, but were constantly called upon to satisfy the needs and greed of the living. The results, as we have seen, were hardly beneficial.

*Types of documents, their numbers, scripts, and languages.*—In addition to fragmentation and other damage, as well as the confusion wrought by the very process of the disposal of documents in the Geniza, there is another factor that makes it so utterly different from an archive: its erratic character, the entire absence of selection in the material deposited in it. Alongside carefully worded and magnificently executed deeds, one finds hastily written notes, accounts or letters, jotted down in nearly illegible script and in sloppy or faulty language.

The very shortcomings of the Geniza, however, constitute its uniqueness and glory. It is a true mirror of life, often cracked and blotchy, but very wide in scope and reflecting each and every aspect of the society that originated it. Practically everything for which writing was used has come down to us. In the following, the main types will be characterized. Examples of each category, translated into English, are provided in *Mediterranean People*.[28]

The largest and most valuable group of Geniza documents is made up of court depositions, either statements made or agreements reached. They appear in three different forms, as drafts, as court records, or as documents handed over to the people concerned. The declarations made by the parties or witnesses are often rendered verbatim, while the case itself would be stated succinctly and clearly by the scribe. Almost every conceivable human relationship is represented in these records, and they often read like local news told by a gifted reporter.

Of legal deeds proper, the marriage contracts, many hundreds of which have survived, are unusually interesting. They are by no means stereotyped, but state in detail and with great variety the conditions regulating the future relations of the newly married, and thus constitute a precious source for our knowledge of family life. In addition, they contain, or are accompanied by, detailed lists of the marriage portion brought by the bride, her jewelry, clothing, bedding and other furniture, her "copper" and other household utensils, and often a bride would also possess a house or houses or parts of a house, as well as one or more maidservants. Often the price of each item is indicated. Needless to say, these lists are an invaluable aid for the study of the material civilization of the period.

Contrariwise, the bills of divorce, of which a great number has also been preserved, are mere formularies. In them, only the names of the divorced and the signatories, as well as the dates and places, are sometimes of interest for social history. On the other hand, the settlements reached between the divorced and the lists of the wife's possessions restored to her are often very instructive.

Marriage contracts were torn up after the wife had received everything owed her in case of divorce or after the death of her husband. Moreover, the contracts were usually written on large pieces of vellum or paper and their reverse sides left blank. Therefore, when no longer needed, they were often torn into pieces for scrap paper. To say that nine out of ten marriage contracts in the Geniza are incomplete is an understatement.

Wills and deathbed declarations are disappointing insofar as they consist almost exclusively of dispositions about property. In the Geniza there are no ethical wills, a document so frequent in later centuries. Yet, very often the last disposition of a person gives a clear idea not only of his possessions, but also of his mind. For economic and social history, of course, the wills are veritable mines of information, and so are the inventories of estates, both of the rich and the poor. The many booklists with or without prices found in the Geniza are mostly enclosures to such inventories of estates.

Deeds of manumission of slaves and slave girls (only the latter are frequent) are mostly stereotyped, but not without interest. Sometimes, the manumission is included in a disposition on the deathbed.

As for transactions in general, one of the most common types of

documents is releases, declarations by one or several persons renouncing all claims against another or others. Many of the longest and best preserved Geniza documents belong to this category. They are more important for legal than for social history, as most of the wording is legal terminology.

Another type of document, the yield of which is in no relation to its length, is the letter of attorney of which there are many. These, too, are mostly composed of legal phrases. Still, because they normally indicate not only the persons and places involved, but also the subject matter for which the power of attorney is given, they are rarely without interest.

Deeds of sale or gifts of houses (more frequently, parts of houses) and of slave girls, as well as leases of apartments or of land, are common and naturally always contain some useful information. With the exception of books, no contracts were made for the sale of goods. In case of litigation, only letters and account books were produced and witnesses called up.

The constitution or dissolution of partnerships normally resulted in interesting documents. On the other hand, loans and promises of payment of debts are mostly disappointing because as a rule the reasons and other circumstances of the indebtedness are not stated.

Very few contracts of employment have been preserved. The reasons for this defect are twofold. First, even a poor laborer preferred to enter into a partnership with a richer fellow craftsman than to become his employee. Secondly, when persons, especially younger ones, hired themselves out as servants or as laborers, normally no written contract was made.

Turning now to correspondence, we find, as was to be expected, that business letters form the largest and most important group. They are our main source not only for our knowledge of commerce and industry, but also for various other subjects, such as travel and seafaring. Normally, a letter, especially when going overseas, deals with many topics at a time: receipt and dispatch of goods, lists of market prices, orders for new commodities, action taken or to be taken for or against third persons, as well as references to private or public affairs. Business was conducted on the basis of trust and friendship, wherefore business letters are rarely without a personal touch.

For this very reason there is no clear-cut demarcation between commercial and private correspondence. Even in a letter of congratulation to the addressee at his wedding, or in a letter of condolence—again, especially when sent overseas—one finds paragraphs dealing with financial matters, while business letters usually contain shorter or longer references to the receiver's health, social status, family, and friends. Nevertheless there are hundreds of letters of a purely personal character covering, of course, a great variety of topics. Although only a small fraction of the female population knew how to write (for this art

was normally practiced only by people engaged in business, administration, or learning), many letters to and from women have survived. In many cases it is evident that the letters were dictated. We hear the female voice guiding the male pen.

Commerce, banking, and industry are further illustrated by accounts, inventories of stores and workshops, or of pawnshops, by bills of lading, promissory notes and orders of payment, while short notes of many types, prescriptions, placards, horoscopes, charms and amulets, and exercise books written for or by children grant us additional glimpses into daily life.

A large portion of the Geniza papers refers to public affairs. There are hundreds of letters addressed to various authorities containing reports, petitions, requests for help, demands for redress of injustice, applications for appointments, and a great variety of other matters. Less in number, but still preserved in considerable quantities, are letters emanating from authorities, such as instructions to communities or public officials, letters of appointment or of introduction or recommendation, certificates, decrees, bans, circulars, in particular those soliciting contributions to certain works of public charity, and, of course, exchanges of letters between one authority and another. Mention must be made also of the endless appeals by the heads of the academies or other institutions of higher learning for funds, or their letters of thanks and appreciation to the donors.

Of particular interest are the letters from communities large and small. We have statutes, public resolutions, and, in particular, many lists of contributors to a great variety of good public causes or of receivers of alms, clothes, or loaves of bread. These lists are priceless sources for the demography of the communities concerned. Another most valuable group of documents comprises the financial reports of honorary treasurers, or of persons farming out the collection of rents, about the sums received from the houses and other property belonging to the community, the expenses on their upkeep and repair, and the emoluments of the officials and other persons on the payroll of the community.

As it was customary to say a public prayer for a meritorious person—and who was not?—and to commemorate in it his forefathers and their descendants, at least up to the sixth or seventh generation, many "memorial lists" have been found in the Geniza. Sometimes the prayer for the person thus honored is attached, but mostly the lists alone were written down. Their correct interpretation often presents no small difficulty, for they are mostly scribbled hastily and more often than not presuppose the knowledge of some details familiar to the members of the congregation but not to us. Still, despite their being sometimes cryptic or ambiguous, most of them are instructive in many respects.

At the present stage of research, it is impossible to state the exact number of Geniza papers of documentary character in existence. In

order to give some idea of the size of the material in question, an estimate is offered, which is, however, of an entirely preliminary character. If we exclude the many thousands that are mere scraps of paper, we arrive at the number of about 10,000 items of some length, of which around 7,000 are self-contained units large enough to be regarded as documents of historical value. Only about half of these are preserved more or less completely.

It should be emphasized that these numbers refer solely to papers of *documentary* character, such as described in the previous pages. The leaves with literary contents—fragments of *books* preserved in the Geniza—number at least twenty times as much. A reasonable estimate would be 250,000 leaves, and this exclusive of the so-called Second Firkovitch Collection in the State Public Library of Leningrad, of which material it is likely that much has come from the Cairo Geniza. Compare this figure with the total number of Arabic papyri and papers unearthed in Egypt which Adolf Grohmann, the most competent authority on the subject, estimates to be around fifty thousand.[29]

It may be remarked in passing that the remnants of literature assembled in the Geniza are by no means confined to religious texts or to topics of specifically Jewish interest. They comprise practically all subjects on which medieval authors wrote books, ranging from philosophy and medicine to the interpretation of dreams and folktales. Naturally, most of the secular texts come from the orbit of the Islamic civilization. There are also others, though. Recently, a Germanic poem on Horant and Hilde was discovered (or, rather, rediscovered) by L. Fuks in the Taylor-Schechter Collection of the University Library, Cambridge, and edited in an important two-volume publication. The poem, which consists of over one thousand lines, was included, together with other Germanic poems, mostly on biblical themes, in a codex of eighty-four pages, dated 1382 and written, of course, in Hebrew script.[30]

It is not always possible to distinguish precisely documentary from literary texts. This is true in particular for the most common type of literature found in the Geniza, the so-called responsa, or "answers" of authoritative scholars on questions of religious, legal, or general character addressed to them. The responsa and their Muslim counterparts, the *fatwa*'s, or opinions of the muftis, were collected in books, which, in Judaism and Islam, fulfill a role similar to the collections of cases and decisions of high courts in English and American law, and, as their scope was wider, were of even more general importance. A considerable number of the responsa were purely theoretical. In these, usually one or more ancient texts were quoted by the questioner with the aim of getting an explanation of obscure or apparently contradictory passages. But there are countless responsa in the Geniza which contain actual cases, and these, of course, are as valuable source material for social history as the other types of Geniza papers of documentary

character surveyed. On the other hand, the two classes of questions usually were mixed up in the collections of responsa, and what we find in the Geniza mostly are not the original questions and answers, but fragments of books in which the answers of prominent scholars were reproduced, and often the authors of these books omitted all the legally irrelevant aspects of a case, such as dates, names of persons and places, and other local color, in other words those features that interest the social historian most. For this reason, and also because most of the ancient responsa have been published and their contents incorporated in publications, only sparing use will be made of them in this book. An exception will be made only for the responsa of Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) and his son Abraham (1186–1237), not for the sentimental reason that these two great masters actually made legal decisions in the Geniza synagogue, but because of the good luck that the full texts of the original questions and answers have been largely incorporated in the collections of their opinions, a fact we are able to check, as some of their autographed answers have also been preserved.[31]

Another type of writing of half-documentary and half-literary character are the so-called *megilloth*, or scrolls, which, like the biblical scrolls of Ruth or Esther, describe fateful events or periods in the life of a person, a family, or a community. All the megilloth found in the Geniza are in Hebrew and obviously were intended to be works of literature, some being cast in rhymed prose. In any case, they do illustrate the society from which they emanated. The autobiography of Johannes-Obadiah, the Norman proselyte, rendered in extract in *Mediterranean People*, is an example.[32]

The script of the Geniza documents, irrespective of the language used, is as a rule Hebrew. This is implied in the very definition of a geniza, as explained in the opening paragraphs of this Introduction. Many types of Hebrew script, varying according to the country, time, social class, and profession of the writers, are represented, and a careful study of their paleography is a prerequisite for any attempt at deciphering and correct interpretation. Very considerable quantities of writings in characters other than Hebrew, in particular in Arabic, are to be found among the Geniza documents, and not only in the frequent cases where the reverse side of an Arabic document was used for a text in Hebrew characters, but also when both sides bore a letter or another kind of writing exclusively in Arabic. The disposal of such pieces in the Geniza can best be explained by the assumption that they were kept originally in a family archive or a similar collection together with Hebrew writings, until the whole lot was thrown away by a member of an indiscriminating later generation. This assumption seems to be corroborated by the fact that sometimes an Arabic document is found which refers to the same subject matter as another in Hebrew letters.

Unlike Arabic script, the Arabic language prevails in most of the Geniza material of documentary character; in other words, the Jews,

who have left us the records of their daily life in the Geniza, mostly wrote, as they talked, in one of the various Arabic vernaculars that were then in vogue in Spain, Sicily, and in most of the countries of northern Africa and western Asia. The use of the Hebrew script for this purpose should not be surprising. The habit of writing in a script hallowed by one's own religion was by no means confined to Jews. Thus, the Syriac Christians wrote Arabic in Syriac. And when we find that the Poles write their slavic language in Latin characters, while the Yugoslavs use for theirs the Russian (Cyrillic) script, the reason for this difference is simply that at the time of their becoming literate, the former were Roman Catholics and the latter Greek Orthodox and each adopted the script of the church to which they belonged.

It should be noted that a great many of the nonliterary Geniza papers were composed in the Hebrew language. To begin with, European Jews did not have other means of making themselves understood in the East, and scholarly persons frequently used Hebrew in letters, in particular in those that referred to communal and religious affairs. Arabic was used, however, in most private and family letters, even those written by religious dignitaries, in most official correspondence, and in all business letters. In epistles of a more formal character, such as applications or letters of condolence or congratulations, it was customary to begin with a shorter or longer (and sometimes very long) Hebrew preamble, which, however, consisted mostly of general, although often artistically contrived, and conventional phrases.

The situation is more complicated as far as legal documents are concerned. The ancient language of the Jewish courts was Aramaic, which had been the international language of western Asia for 1,300 years before it was replaced by Arabic. In the tenth century, Aramaic was not known well any more and the Jewish courts began to change over to Hebrew, with which, of course, educated persons had always been familiar. Many deeds and court records from the first half of the eleventh century are composed in that language and their smooth and rich style proves that the usage was general. Since it was required, however, that the records should render verbatim the depositions made in court, and since the spoken language was Arabic, the scribes slowly acquiesced in using the Arabic.[33] It is noteworthy that Hebrew lingered on in the smaller towns of Egypt longer than in the large centers, the reason being perhaps that the scribes in the smaller towns had not yet learned the relevant Arabic terms and style for making out a proper legal document in that language. By the end of the eleventh century and throughout the whole of the twelfth, Arabic was used practically in all transactions of the Jewish courts which have reached us. Then, around 1200, Hebrew begins to reappear, perhaps because of the increasing influx of Jews from Europe, or because Moses Maimonides had written his code of Jewish law in a lucid, flexible Hebrew, which could serve as a model to the scribes of the courts.[34]

The Arabic used in the Geniza records is by no means a particular Jewish dialect, but represents the language of the time and the country and social group to which the writer belonged. This can be proved by comparison with contemporaneous Arabic writings, especially those of Christian Arabs and Muslim popular literature, especially of a later period. (It always takes some time before the language of every day is allowed to creep into the literary style.) Hebrew words and phrases were inserted only very sparingly, mainly religious and legal terms, but also proverbial expressions and sometimes certain characteristic turns of speech that the Hebrew but not the Arabic language seemed to possess. Still, the Arabic of the Geniza records somehow is a world by itself, because the very fact that it was written in a script other than that of classical Arabic by persons who had not in their childhood memorized the Koran, the holy book of Islam, made for greater independence from the traditional grammar and vocabulary. Therefore the Geniza papers reflect the living language, and they constitute, in their great variety of styles and local idioms, a first-rate source for the history of the Arabic language. In addition, the Hebrew script often brings out features that the Arabic script is unable to express, which means that the pronunciation of many words, as it was in vogue in the eleventh or twelfth century, becomes established through their transcript into Hebrew.[35] A similar service was done to the Arabic language, in a later period, by transliteration into Latin characters.

Needless to say, these documents contain many riddles for the scholar, for he encounters words not to be found in any dictionary and linguistic usages unknown to classical grammar. The solution is often to be found in the Arabic dialects of our own time. Thus I would not have been able to understand certain terms and expressions common in letters written in Aden and India during the twelfth century had I not devoted much time to the study of Arabic as it is spoken in Yemen today.[36] Another important help is—the Geniza itself. Many obscure words and usages find their explanation when they occur a second or third time. A final aid is the very character of the people speaking to us in the Geniza: the eloquence and lucidity of speech of the Mediterranean man guide the puzzled scholar even where he treads on unfamiliar linguistic ground.[37]

*The times and countries of origin of the Geniza documents.*—In attempting to define with more precision the times and countries from which the documents used in this book originated, we are confronted with a number of perplexing phenomena. As shown at the end of this section, the fixing of these details themselves does not present unsurpassable difficulties. It is, however, not self-evident, why we should have so much material from certain times and countries, while from others we have next to none. Explanations are offered with regard to most of the puzzles, but they should be regarded as tentative, so long as they are not confirmed by the express testimony of our sources.

The first strange fact demanding and perhaps defying an explanation is the very existence of the Cairo Geniza. Since its discovery it has been commonplace to say that of the many genizas in the world, that of Fustat, or Old Cairo, has survived thanks to the dry climate of Egypt. While it is true that the climatic factor has contributed to the preservation of the Geniza of Fustat, it by no means sufficiently explains why only this one should have remained. Fustat itself had not one, but three, synagogues; nearby Cairo had another one shortly after its foundation and many others later on.[38] About seventy-five towns and villages in Egypt are known from the Geniza as places where Jews were settled. Moreover, certain regions in southern Palestine and in the countries of North Africa have a dry climate similar to that of Egypt. But from nowhere outside Fustat has anything comparable to the Cairo Geniza been found.

Even more so. As explained on page 1, above, the contents of a Geniza chamber were normally removed to a cemetery to make room for other discarded books and writings. This was a general Jewish custom. *Life* magazine of October 24, 1960, page 70, carried a full-page photograph showing the interment of prayerbooks and other worn-out religious objects by a group of orthodox Jewish youngsters in Washington, D.C., explaining that the famous Dead Sea Scrolls also came from a geniza (which is, however, doubtful). In Jerusalem, as late as the nineteenth century, it was customary to empty the genizas every seventh year and also in a year of drought, for it was believed that the burial of dried-out sacred books was conducive to the precipitation of heavenly moisture.[39] As a result, no old material was found in any of the genizas of Jerusalem, despite the careful searches made under the direction of the late Dr. J. L. Magnes, the first chancellor of the Hebrew University.[40] For the same reason, and to the disgust of E. N. Adler, the widely traveled connoisseur of books, even the "huge Geniza" of the famous ancient synagogue of Aleppo in northern Syria contained nothing but late printings. "Though the dust was more acrid, and the work far dirtier than that of Fustat, the matrix was modern, and the dirt not pay dirt."[41] In Old Cairo, however, the very building of the Geniza was of such a size that it was able to hold its contents for a thousand years, and it was constructed in such a way that it could not serve any other purpose than that for which it was destined: a room with no doors or windows and with only one hole in the wall beneath the roof, which could be reached only by a ladder. All this seems to indicate that those who erected the Geniza chamber and those who used it in its early period must have entertained particular ideas about the disposal of Hebrew writings and it was due to these that so much ancient material has been preserved. So far, however, the Geniza has not revealed any direct evidence for such ideas.

Who were these people? Around 1000, the Jews were divided into two groups, the major being formed by the so-called Rabbanites—those

who followed the teachings of the rabbanim or rabbis—and the minor by the Karaites, who professed to rely on the Bible alone. The Rabbanites were subdivided into Palestinians and Iraqians (also called Babylonians). Palestinian Rabbanites were communities whose members had originally come from Palestine and Syria, whose service was conducted according to the liturgy accepted in Palestine, and whose officials were appointed and communal leaders approved by the religious authorities who had their official seat in Jerusalem. Babylonian Rabbanites stood in the same relationship to Iraq and the Jewish seats of learning in that country. All three sections mentioned possessed houses of worship in Old Cairo. The Geniza chamber was attached to the synagogue of the Palestinians. It is therefore necessary to devote special attention to them.

In 882, when the Coptic patriarch was forced to pay a heavy contribution to Aḥmad Ibn Ṭulūn, the ruler of Egypt, he sold a church that originally had been Melchite, that is Greek Orthodox, together with some land, to the Jews, who converted it into a synagogue. It has been generally assumed that this was the Geniza synagogue. A careful weighing of the available evidence seems to show, however, that the Coptic church was acquired by the newcomers from Iraq who had no house of worship of their own, while the synagogue of the Palestinians was pre-Islamic, as reported by Muslim historians.[42] Be this as it may, next to no documents from the ninth century have come down to us in the Geniza, and only a few dozen from the tenth.[43] Perhaps the particular idea of a permanent geniza had not yet been born or else we have to seek an explanation for this deficiency in the subsequent history of the building. Around 1012, the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim ordered the destruction of the Christian and Jewish houses of worship, including the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and, as we know positively, the synagogue of the Palestinians of Fustat was demolished and its bricks and timber were sold. Thus, if a geniza was attached to it at that time, it could hardly have survived.

A few years after that religious persecution, permission was given to repair the desecrated buildings and an inscription on the entrance to the synagogue of the Palestinians, mentioned by various medieval writers, enables us to fix the year 1025 as the date of its restoration.[44] There is little doubt that the geniza chamber was added during that restoration, for, from 1002 on, we have dated documents for almost every year, and by the twenties of the eleventh century a very sizable quantity. This goes on uninterruptedly for about two hundred and fifty years until 1266, when dated documents begin to become rarer. As is well known, on December 22, 1168, Old Cairo was put to fire at the command of the Fatimid vizier, who dreaded its capture by the advancing Crusaders. For 54 days, the city was ablaze. But this conflagration, albeit referred to in Geniza documents, did not cut off the supply of material from this source. Dated documents are as frequent

after it as they were before. In 1265 great fires again devastated the city. This time, local Christians were accused of having caused them and the Sultan ordered the burning of the Christians and, for completeness' sake, of the Jews as well. As usual, the punishment was converted into a heavy fine. A moving story, how the poor Jews from the countryside helped their brethren in the capital to pay the fine, is to be found in a document from Minyat Ziftā.[45] It seems, unlikely, however, that it was this event that caused the sudden drop of documentary material in the Cairo Geniza. Similarly, it is difficult to see why so few dated documents have been preserved from the fourteenth century and even less from the fifteenth. To be sure, the majority of the Jewish population moved in that period to Cairo, where we find, around 1400, four synagogues as against three in Fustat. The letters addressed by the Nagid Joshua, the great-great-grandson of Maimonides, to the community in Fustat around 1350, show how destitute it had become, while, at the same time, incessant demands were made on the charity of its members.[46] Yet, Fustat was still a large city, half the size of Paris, according to the Belgian traveler Georges Lengherand, who visited it in 1486,[47] and in two Geniza papers dated 1482 and 1496, respectively, Cairo is still defined as "situated near Fustat of Egypt," just as was done by the notaries five hundred years before.[48] It is interesting to observe that in the type of paper used, in script, and in legal formularies these late documents still resemble the deeds of the classical period of the Geniza, although their workmanship is poor and the care taken in their execution limited.

Then everything suddenly changes. Dated documents begin to appear again in greater quantity from the second quarter of the sixteenth century on, but then the paper obviously is no longer locally made, but European; the script is entirely different; it is Spanish-Jewish; the language, as a rule, is Hebrew and no longer Arabic, in some cases, even Ladino, the Castilian dialect used by the Spanish Jews. In other words, the Jewish East was completely overwhelmed by the refugees from Spain, who had to leave their country in 1492 and became prominent in the Ottoman Empire shortly afterward, just as in modern times the Jewish East became assimilated to the emigrants and refugees from eastern and middle Europe.

This book is solely concerned with what has just been termed as the classical Geniza, that is, documents that appear in a trickle during the second part of the tenth century and become a flood for the subsequent two and a half centuries. This means for Islamic history that the Geniza is a primary source for social and economic history during the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods and, as far as European history is concerned, for the century preceding the Crusades and for Crusaders' times themselves.

As to the countries of origin of the Geniza material, naturally Egypt, where the Geniza was situated, provided most, especially as far as

deeds are concerned. The situation is somewhat different with regard to letters, accounts, and related matters, while the scholarly correspondence of the responsa (cf. above, pp. 13 ff.) originated mostly outside Egypt. At that time, Jews lived not only in the capital and the port cities of Alexandria, Rosetta, and Damietta, but were dispersed all over the Nile delta, the Fayyūm oasis, and Upper Egypt. Letters and legal documents from many of the smaller places have found their way into the Geniza which thus is illustrative of life in Egypt in general. Whether the population reflected in these writings was indigenous to the country, that is, whether it represented a continuation of the Jewish settlements in Egypt in Hellenistic and Roman times, or originated mainly after the Muslim conquest, this is a problem for which no clear-cut solution has been found thus far.[49]

Since the Geniza belonged to the synagogue of the Palestinians, it stands to reason that many documents coming from or referring to the Holy Land should be found in it. This is, indeed, the case. There are also a considerable number of letters sent from the coastal towns of Lebanon and Syria, but written mostly by foreign merchants and not by local people. Astonishingly little, comparatively, is the material from Damascus and from Aleppo, the two great cities of Syria. Considering the close commercial relations of these cities with Egypt and the fact that so many people called Dimashqī and Ḥalabī (Damascene and Aleppian) appear in the Geniza papers, one wonders, whether these people were in the habit of disposing of their letters in genizas at all.[50]

The most surprising feature in the contents of the Geniza, as far as its geographical distribution is concerned, is the overwhelming preponderance in it of people from Tunisia and Sicily, especially from the time of its inception around 1000 down to the last quarter of the eleventh century. At least 80 percent, but most probably more, of all the business correspondence in this period comes from them. One indeed gets the impression that the Geniza originally served the Maghrebi merchants who commuted from the western to the eastern part of the Mediterranean and partially settled there. This basic fact had necessarily remained concealed until it was possible, through cross references in about four hundred letters and other documents, to establish the identity of the persons mentioned in them. In particular, it became evident that, in many cases, persons bearing family names such as Andalusī, Fasī, Tāhertī, or Iṭrābulusī, did not come from Andalus-Spain, or Fez and Tāhert, Morocco, or Tripoli, Libya, but had their base in the Tunisian twin cities of Qayrawān and al-Mahdiyya. Likewise, it could be proved that most of the people writing during this period from the smaller places all over Egypt, where flax and indigo, the staple export crops, grew, were merchants from Tunisia.[51] Thus it seems that the Tunisians were the initiators of the idea of the permanent Geniza, and, in particular, of the widening of its scope to comprise

entirely secular matters. Tunisia was at that time a great seat of Jewish learning, and it may well be that one of the leading scholars there instructed his flock to this effect. Beginning with the last quarter of the eleventh century, the use of the Geniza for secular correspondence became more widespread, but the preeminence of the Maghrebis is still felt during the first half of the twelfth century, especially with regard to trade with India.[52]

Fortunately, some recently identified documents enable us to explain the close connection of the Maghrebi merchants with the synagogue of the Palestinians in Old Cairo. Shortly after the churches and synagogues in the Fatimid empire had been destroyed during al-Ḥākim's fit of religious insanity (see above, p. 18), permission was given by him to rebuild them. As we know from a number of Geniza papers, as well as from Christian sources, the afflicted communities experienced great difficulties in raising the funds needed for reconstruction. In this time of hardship, the leaders of the Palestinian synagogue hit upon an expedient, often adopted also by modern community leaders: they admitted the Maghrebis, by which mainly the Tunisian and Sicilian merchants were meant, to public offices and showered upon them honorific titles, confirmed in bombastic letters, sent from the seat of the Academy in Jerusalem. The stratagem was successful; the Maghrebis joined the Palestinian synagogue and soon became its most prominent members.[53]

As impressive as the abundance of Geniza material for Tunisia and Sicily is its dearth in respect to Spain. If we disregard responsa and epistles emanating from, or addressed to, prominent personalities—both of which were collected and copied as pieces of literature and are, of course, important sources of historical information—we would find only about three dozen letters that have been identified, so far, as being written in Spain, and even fewer documents.[54] But the products of Spain filled the markets of Egypt, and there was much direct traffic between the two countries. Moreover, many persons called Andalusī and actually hailing from the Iberian peninsula are mentioned in the Geniza papers. Why, then, do we not find with regard to the Spanish merchants anything comparable to the wealth of information we have for those originating from Tunisia and Sicily? This deficiency might find some explanation in the technique of international trade (see p. 213, below). But considering the ancient and lasting allegiance of Spanish Jewry to the Jewish seats of learning in Babylonia, we are perhaps justified in assuming that the Spanish Jews sojourning in Egypt were connected with the synagogue of the Iraqians of Old Cairo and left their discarded writings in a geniza there, if they were wont to do so at all. That synagogue, which was still fully in use in the sixteenth century, has since entirely disappeared.[55]

A similar assumption may explain also the almost complete absence of private and business correspondence with Iraq and Persia. As is seen

in chapter i, many persons from those countries settled in Egypt and we can prove that some were newcomers. Still, only very few have left letters received from their countries of origin in the Geniza.

It would be rash to attribute this scarcity of documentary material from Iraq and Persia to the political situation, namely to the fact that these countries were under the sway of the Seljuks, who paid homage to the Abbasid caliphs, while Egypt was ruled by their adversaries, the Fatimids. For we have in the Geniza an enormous amount of letters, responsa, and other writings from the Jewish academies of Iraq; indeed, they form one of its main constituents. These responsa and other writings were sent from Baghdad to North Africa and Spain and even to Italy and France via Old Cairo and often were copied there before being forwarded. This explains why we find them in the Geniza. Conversely, contributions were sent from Egypt to Baghdad, accompanied by letters and queries, which also were copied in Old Cairo, before being forwarded. Thus, political barriers cannot account for the paucity of private documents from the Seljuk domain. The volume of trade between these countries and Egypt seems to have been limited, but was by no means so small as to explain the virtual absence of business correspondence between them in the Cairo Geniza. Thus we are again thrown back on the assumption that the merchants from Iraq and Iran disposed of their disused correspondence in the geniza of their own synagogue—again, if they were in the habit of doing so at all.

The situation was again different with regard to western Europe and the Byzantine Empire. Reference is not made here to persons from the orbit of Islamic civilization who happened to stay or to live in one of these countries, such as the doctor from Silifke, whose delightful letter of July, 1137, was written in Arabic, the language of his country of origin.[56] As far as the local people are concerned, we have correspondence from them on spiritual matters, public affairs, and works of charity, but no business letters. Since we read in the Geniza papers frequently about commercial relations with Europeans, this deficiency is rather puzzling. An explanation is attempted in chapter i.

Having arrived at the end of this survey, we have to make good the promise given at its start and to explain, how and with what degree of certainty we are able to fix the times and places of origin of a Geniza paper.

In a proper document, of course, the location and date are indicated. In the event that these details are effaced or torn away, or with regard to a draft or a copy that was not filled in completely, we are still able, if the document is long enough, to gauge its approximate date and place of origin, for the handwritings of the more prominent scribes of the eleventh and twelfth centuries are known to us, and often the subject matter, names, geographical details, and accompanying circumstances enable us to fix the desired data with great precision.

With letters it is far more difficult. Very often the place of destina-

tion and still more frequently the place of writing were omitted. As letters were sent by messenger or with friends, one could well forego these details. If dated at all, only the day and the month were indicated, but only in exceptional cases (perhaps in one out of fifty) the year. The name of the addressee usually was given in full, but the writer often designated himself solely with a general phrase, such as "your grateful friend," "your son," "your brother," the latter phrases mostly indicating a social, rather than a family, relationship. Formal accounts were headed by a superscription, but very often we have only a second or third leaf and naturally, many of the accounts found—indeed the majority—are but notes made by the writer for his own use.

If, in spite of these handicaps, we are able to approximate the location and date of at least four-fifths of all the longer pieces preserved, this is owing to the fact that originally whole bunches of papers were deposited together in the Geniza. As noted, the contents of the Geniza were continuously jumbled and, at the end, dispersed in many libraries all over the world. Where we succeed in uniting the scattered parts of a unit, however, we often find that one fragment explains another, and often several fragments taken together provide us with means to fix their time and place of origin. There are many ways to find out where a piece belongs and to what its details refer. The interpretation of an ancient account, attempted below, pages 339–343, can give an idea of the technique applied.

The basis of all this is, of course, that we are familiar with the persons and things prevalent during the classical period of the Geniza. As far as the Mediterranean area is concerned, card indexes containing the names of about 350 more and 3,200 less prominent persons, those of about 200 better-known families, 450 professions, and about the same number of goods form the means for preliminary identification. The list of persons of lesser importance could easily be doubled. After this and similar work is done, we shall be able approximately to place almost any document of some length found in the Geniza.

*Research on the Cairo Geniza documents and their value for social history.*—The card indexes mentioned in the preceding paragraph have been prepared mostly from unpublished documents. It would not have been possible to do this, had not previous research on the Geniza created the historical framework of the period, so that it was comparatively easy to fit into it the details concerning social and economic life.

It was a happy coincidence that the Geniza was discovered near the turn of the century when Oriental and Jewish studies had reached an unprecedented peak. First-rate scholars used their unique knowledge to identify, or to put into their historical contexts, the literary pieces that came to light, as well as to fix the sequence and mutual relationship in which unknown or little-known personalities or institutions stood to each other. There were no Geniza specialists before World War I, but many of the most important texts were printed and many of the basic

facts about their contents were established between 1896 and 1914. The great achievements of this period of Geniza research are evident from Shaked's *Bibliography*.[57]

It was soon recognized that sporadic publication of particularly interesting documents or texts was not a satisfactory approach to the study of the Geniza. Solomon Schechter planned a systematic corpus,[58] but, being preoccupied, as of 1902, with his new tasks as President of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York, he was unable to devote much time to the project. After his death, there actually appeared three volumes of literary texts, most of which he himself had selected for publication.[59] The fourth volume, which was to contain historical material, never came out. The reason for this is easily understood. Documents, in order to make sense, have to be read in their historical context. They cannot be merely "published"; they must first be studied together with the greatest possible number of documents of similar character. Their significance, and often their mere meaning, become evident only after prolonged comparative study. It was the late Jacob Mann of the Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, who undertook this arduous task.

Jacob Mann was a student of Jewish history. He confined himself mainly to letters written in Hebrew and dealing with Jewish communal affairs. Who were the communal leaders in each period and place, what were their relations amongst themselves, as well as between them and the various governments and the local authorities? These were the questions that interested him and to which he tried to find the answers. A lengthy stay in England gave him the opportunity to study the four main Geniza collections in Cambridge, Oxford, the British Museum, and Elkan N. Adler's library which was later sold to the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York. The result was his book, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fāṭimid Caliphs* (Oxford, 1920 and 1922), the first volume of which contains a consecutive, although somewhat disconnected, narrative, while the second provides a very large selection of texts. Mann did not intend to provide a definitive *edition* of those texts—in many cases, only a short passage out of a long document is given, and those printed in full sometimes need revision. Therefore, historians, let alone linguists, who want to make use of this volume for exact research, are advised always to provide themselves with a photostat of the original. But Mann's book will remain a classic as long as the Geniza is studied.

The *Jews . . . under the Fāṭimid Caliphs*, although a noteworthy achievement in itself, was only a beginning. Mann continued to publish important Geniza material bearing on Jewish communal and literary history and crowned his efforts with the publication of a 700-page volume of Geniza texts called *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, Vol. I (Cincinnati, 1931). Here, too, the subject is mainly communal and literary history, but attention is paid also to social life,

and, unlike Mann's first book, his *Texts and Studies* contains quite a number of texts in Arabic.[60] In addition to the mass of material made accessible by Mann, it was his constant endeavor to place the information gained from the Geniza geographically and chronologically which makes his publications so valuable. His lasting merit is to have created the historical framework for all future study of the documentary Geniza.

Of an entirely different character was the work of the late Simha Assaf of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, who also devoted a lifetime to Geniza studies. He came to this field of research from two different angles. First, like his meritorious friend Benjamin M. Lewin, he was devoted to the study of the literature produced by the Geonim, or heads of the Jewish academies of Babylonia (Iraq), who were the acknowledged spiritual leaders of the Jewish community during the Arab period down to the eleventh century.

These leaders were approached by Jewish scholars from all over the world with theoretical and practical questions. The answers of the heads of the academies, the responsa, which were often given after long deliberations with their members, form thus not only an important and authoritative part of Jewish religious literature, but are also a source for the social history of the Jewish communities during the High Middle Ages (cf. above, p. 13).[61]

Since the invention of printing, many collections of Geonic responsa have been published, but the texts usually were abridged and, as far as they were in Arabic, translated into Hebrew. A first and most valuable edition of original Geonic responsa was made by A. Harkavy in 1887 on the basis of four manuscripts from the Second Firkovitch Collection of the Imperial Library in St. Petersburg (Leningrad), whose contents, we now know, most probably stem largely from the Cairo Geniza.[62] After "the discovery" of the latter in 1896, countless—according to Assaf, thousands—of such responsa have come to light. Of the many publications before World War I, the most distinguished was *Geonica* (2 vols.) by Louis Ginzberg (New York, 1909). He was followed by S. Assaf, who, between 1927 and 1942, published four volumes of Geonic responsa from the Cairo Geniza, mainly from manuscripts preserved in Leningrad and Cambridge. At the same time Benjamin M. Lewin planned and began the publication of a huge commentary on the Talmud formed by quotations from Geonic responsa, also taken largely from Geniza material.

Another factor in Assaf's Geniza studies was his interest in social and cultural history. He had published, in 1925, a first volume of a source book for the history of Jewish education (the fourth and final volume came out in 1948), and wrote a great number of studies on subjects as different as "Jewish Criminal Law in Post-Talmudic Times," "History of the Jews in Malta," "Family Life of Byzantine Jews." No wonder that the documents of the Cairo Geniza attracted

his attention. The documents referring to social life are mostly in Arabic, a language with which Assaf was not familiar. Thus there developed a sort of cooperation between him and the members of the School of Oriental Studies of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and, in particular its Professor of Arabic, D. H. Baneth, which was most conducive to the furthering of the study of the Geniza documents written in the Arabic language. Baneth either deciphered and translated the documents in question himself or corrected those worked on by others. It was, however, not only his dealing with the individual documents, but his methodological approach to the treatment of texts written in medieval Arabic, which made Baneth's contribution so significant. As explained above, page 16, these texts are not written according to the rules of classical grammar; therefore, a scholar dealing with them has first to find out what degree of colloquialism is apparent in them, in other words, what was the actual language of their writers? A "mistake" is only a deviation from the normal language of each individual. Many phenomena that appear to be gross blunders to a scholar reared on classical grammar were perfectly "normal" and in general use. It is the task of the student of medieval texts to make himself acquainted with that usage and to interpret each individual text in its light.

In addition to his linguistic commentaries to the texts published, Baneth has written special studies about the strange ways of this language and created what could be called the Jerusalem school of the students of medieval Arabic.[63] A former student of his, Professor Joshua Blau, wrote a grammar of nonliterary medieval Judeo-Arabic texts, and explained the emergence and nature of this vernacular, which is one of the best-known examples of Middle Arabic, in a series of important studies.[64]

Although Assaf was interested in social history in general, he had an Arabic text translated only when the names of significant persons or places occurring in them or other indications forecast a particularly interesting publication. A systematic perusal of the whole documentary Geniza for the purpose of social studies was not yet envisaged. This is the task incumbent upon the present generation.

"Business letter, and therefore valueless"—this remark about a Geniza paper, appearing in the printed catalogue of a most distinguished library about thirty years ago—betrays the attitude of former generations. Things not connected with theology or literature or, at least, referring to a famous personality, were not regarded as worthy of the attention of a serious scholar. Today we believe that we cannot afford to neglect any type of writing which has come down to us, for life is one single undivided unit, wherefore we cannot form a proper idea of the spiritual aspirations of a society if we do not pay some attention also to its daily life and to its economic foundations. In addition, the

knowledge of how people lived in a region and time so significant for human history is interesting in itself.

The question is, of course, how far are the Cairo Geniza records apt to provide us with an adequate picture of the society that has left them to us, and, secondly, how far is this particular society typical of life around the Mediterranean in this period in general.

As may be concluded from the survey of the types of records preserved (given above, pp. 10–12), they do not illustrate all sides of economic and social life with equal completeness. Thus we learn about agriculture and the technical aspects of arts and crafts far less than we might wish, for the simple reason that the writers of these records had little opportunity to make mention of them. But the working people themselves are comparatively well represented and so are the more general aspects of industry. Commerce and banking, naturally, produced a huge amount of legal documents and business correspondence; therefore, they are richly documented, and so, and for similar reasons, is the life of the scholars and doctors. For special reasons explained on page 77, below, the upper class is reflected in letters for help addressed to its members rather than in correspondence between them.

As the Geniza was located in the same synagogue compound where the courts held their sessions, we have abundant material about them and related matters. The Geniza records reveal also how the actions of the government affected the life of the population and how the various religious communities got along with each other. More than any other topic, family life is illustrated by the Geniza, again, as in the case of commerce and banking, and even more than there, because it is reflected in many types of legal documents as well as in letters. For the things of daily life, such as food, clothing, houses; birth, upbringing, illness, retirement, death and burial; social etiquette and customs, our information is uneven, very rich in some respects and limited in others. For people do not normally speak in their letters about things that everyone knows. There is, however, one domain of daily life for which the Geniza provides many-sided and detailed illustrations: travel and seafaring. The reason for this is again self-evident: when people are away from home, they write. Even if they are, like our men, experienced travelers, who do not waste many words about their experiences, still the very circumstances force them to tell us something about them. Observations on people in foreign countries are scarce. Had the Geniza been found in Spain, on the edge of the Islamic world, instead of Egypt, its very center, the situation perhaps would have been different. The tenth-century Spanish-Jewish traveler Ibrāhīm b. Ya'qūb is a case in point. While visiting Rouen, he remarks that a certain fish in the Seine river had the same taste and smell as a fish, called by him by name, caught in the Nile. Thus, it stands to reason that he had traveled to Egypt before visiting France and Central Europe. But no tale of his

about Muslim countries has been preserved. On the other hand, the cold, Christian north was a new experience for him. Therefore, his report on it is richer than anything found in the Geniza letters whose writers were confined to the Mediterranean.[65]

The subject that interests us most, the mind of the Geniza people, the things they believed in and stood for, is not reflected in one particular type of document, but has to be abstracted from all the material in hand. Here, some sections of the literary fragments, which, as stated above, are at least twenty times as many as the documentary, will also have to be taken into account.

The second question posed earlier, how far the society reflected in the Geniza papers may be regarded as representative of Mediterranean society in medieval times in general, is answered, partly implicitly, in chapter i and in Volume III, chapter x.

CHAPTER I

# *The Mediterranean Scene During the High Middle Ages (969–1250)*

## 1. HISTORICAL SURVEY

The Fatimid conquest of Egypt in July, 969, marks the beginning of the classical Geniza period. The eclipse of their successors, the Ayyubids, in 1250, roughly coincides with its end.[1]

It was a time of profound and lasting changes on the Mediterranean scene. Naval superiority shifted from the Muslim south to the Christian north. On the African coast, the center of gravity moved from Tunisia, which had been the nucleus of Fatimid power during the tenth century, eastward toward Egypt. Along the northern shore the trend was westward: Byzantium, in its role as the protagonist of Christendom, was replaced by the Italian republics, the Normans, and, later on, by the kingdoms of France and Spain.

During all this period, neither the Mediterranean as a whole nor either of its western or eastern basins was ever dominated exclusively by a single state. As a rule, governments enjoyed only comparatively short periods of strength or were altogether weak. With the exception of Venice, there was not one maritime power that lasted during all this time. It was a period of relatively free trade, of growing activities of exchange between the nations, and of the prominence of the mercantile middle class. In the eleventh and the major part of the twelfth centuries, a spirit of tolerance and liberalism prevailed, in particular in the Fatimid empire. The thirteenth century saw the victory of intolerance and fanaticism in the Muslim East, accompanied and furthered by the rule of alien soldier castes. At the same time, clerical influence and obscurantism became oppressive on the European shores of the Mediterranean. Otherwise, however, the ways of East and West parted. The ancient unity of the Mediterranean world, which was characteristic of most of the period under discussion, definitely gave way to entirely

new developments: a Europe, which was beginning to explore avenues never conceived before by the human spirit, and an East secluding and narrowing itself and making only limited use of its own spiritual heritage.

The Fatimid conquest of Egypt and the adjacent countries meant much for the history of the Mediterranean, and its significance is duly reflected in the Geniza records. A new dynasty, holding religious tenets different from those professed by the majority of Muslims, took possession of the central provinces of the Arab world and controlled them for two centuries (969–1171). The Fatimid caliphs claimed to be descendants of the Prophet Muhammad (through his daughter Fatima) and were the exponents of the Ismā'īliyya, an extremist sect, which ascribed supernatural faculties to its religiopolitical leaders, an idea abhorred by other Muslims. This religious schism, tragic and ill-omened as it may have appeared to the contemporary Muslims, was of only transitory importance, as compared with the tremendous political, demographic, and economic changes, which accompanied or caused the Fatimid success.

In early Islam, as in Roman times, all North Africa was a colonial and provincial area. Egypt had to provide Syria, which was the seat of the caliphal government, as well as northern Arabia, which harbored the holy cities of Islam, with wheat and other victuals, just as it had done once for Rome, then the capital of the Mediterranean world. When the conquering Muslim Arabs pushed westward from Egypt through the whole of North Africa, they were hunting for slaves, gold, and other treasures. Those vast stretches of land were for them at the beginning nothing but a field for quick enrichment and ruthless exploitation. Then, as so often happens in history—North America is the most conspicuous example—those colonial areas prospered economically and, in due course, acquired political strength. The once peripheral territories became centers of power.

Muslim North Africa owed the ascendancy it achieved during the Fatimid period not only to its natural resources and certain favorable trends in world trade, discussed presently, but also to the influx of vigorous elements full of ambition, and sometimes also equipped with capital and technical know-how. All the various principalities that sprang up on the soil of Muslim North Africa down to this period, including the Fatimid, were founded and ruled by foreigners coming from the East: Arabs, Persians, and Turks. We read about the exploits of these adventurers in the accounts of the historians. The Geniza records teach us that the new bourgeiosie of the North African countries, too, had its roots in the ancient centers of commerce and industry of Syria, Iraq, and Iran.[2] This great population movement from East to West was in the main completed by the end of the tenth century, the time when the Geniza records begin to appear in larger numbers.[3] Thus we notice in them the results rather than the course of this great

historical process. Our material consists in family names, the names of grandparents or other ancestors, but sometimes also in direct references to westward migration.

The Fatimid conquest of Egypt was a movement in the opposite direction. The country of the Nile was conquered from the West, from Tunisia, by an army consisting mostly of Berbers of the Ketāma people. From that time on, Ketāmis were found all over Egypt, Palestine, and Syria—as commanders, as insurgents, or as private citizens, and in all these capacities they appear in the Geniza papers.[4] Our sources by no means convey the impression that their presence determined the mold of Fatimid society. The Ketāmi conquest did not convert the Fatimid empire into a Berber state. For the Berbers, like another warlike people who became prominent in this period, the Kurds, had little capacity or inclination for the formation of lasting national states. In any event, the Fatimid caliphs soon counterbalanced the Ketāmis by corps of Turkish mercenaries, Sudanese Negro contingents, and Arab Bedouin levies, while for posts of confidence and command they engaged persons from a great variety of races, including Europeans (mostly former slaves of Slavic[5] provenance) and also availed themselves to a large extent of the services of local Christians and Jews.

Somewhat more complicated is the question of how far the tenets and theology of the ruling sect were responsible for the character of the new state. As noted earlier, the Fatimid period was one of relative tolerance and liberalism, if compared with the preceding and, in particular, the following periods. As the sect was organized as a secret society, we know only the literature that was more or less destined for public consumption and we cannot be sure what the initiated admitted to the innermost circle believed. The Geniza, naturally, cannot help us in this respect. The only express reference to the Ismāʿīliyya, found thus far, describes them as Jew-baiters, but in the document in question some local branch is referred to which might have represented an exception rather than the rule of conduct of that sect.[6] It is reasonable to assume that the Fatimids and their Ismāʿīlī followers did not create the comparatively liberal spirit of the period, but the fact that they represented only a small minority among the Muslim population of Egypt and Syria contributed to a trend of tolerance in their conduct of government and to a general leniency toward other minority groups.

Of greater import than the Ketāmi soldiers and the Ismāʿīlī missionaries were the changes in the trends of international trade and trade routes. During the tenth century Fatimid Tunisia and its dependencies (Sicily and parts of Algeria and Libya) enjoyed an unprecedented efflorescence. They served as distributors of Indian and other Oriental products, as well as those of Egypt and Syria for the flourishing Muslim West and for economically ascending Christian Europe. It was this economic predominance that enabled Tunisia to conquer almost

the whole of North Africa to the Atlantic Ocean and, later on, even Egypt with its adjacent countries.

The eleventh century, however, witnessed a complete translocation of the Mediterranean trade routes. The removal of the seat of the Fatimid government from Tunisia to Egypt was in itself a vital change. The army, the court, and the administration were the greatest consumers and, naturally, contributed much to the shifting of the center of trade from Qayrawān and al-Mahdiyya to Cairo and Alexandria. Even more important, it seems, were the international developments. The merchant cities on the west coast of Italy, in particular Genoa and Pisa, emerged as strong sea powers during this century, with the corollary that the role of entrepôt enjoyed by Tunisia slowly slipped away from it. Europe traded directly with the Levant and also obtained there the goods coming from India and the Far East. Moreover, ever larger ships were built toward the end of the century, which were able to sail from Spain or France to Egypt or the Syro-Palestinian coast without calling on an intermediate port.

The economic eclipse of Tunisia was aggravated by political and military disasters. In the forties of the eleventh century, Tunisia renounced its precarious allegiance to the Fatimids, but had to pay a terrible price for the break with its former overlords. First harassed by Libyan pirates, who intercepted its trade with the East, it was laid waste and its prosperity destroyed in the fifties, when a Fatimid vizier unleashed against it the locust-like Bedouin hordes of the Hilāl and Sulaym. Egypt took the place of Tunisia in the international trade, and, as such, attracted the more enterprising elements from that country.

Nothing is more impressive in the Geniza records of the period than the spectacle of this migration of the Maghrebis, or Westerners, to Egypt. In the beginning, the merchants commute between the two countries; then they take a house in Egypt, leaving their families back in Tunisia; finally, they settle in the new country permanently. This process becomes apparent early in the eleventh century, long before Tunisia succumbed to the devastations of the Hilāl and Sulaym. It is most conspicuous during the second half of the century, but still in operation around 1150, when new disasters, wrought by the hands of the Normans, and later on by the Almohads, befell the unhappy country. These disasters completed what the changes in the trends of world trade had begun: the lively traffic between the mainland of Europe and the Levant, which became even more accentuated in Crusaders' times, meant for Tunisia (and later on also for Sicily) what the discovery of the direct sea route to India did to Egypt four hundred years later.[7]

The conquest of the central countries of the Arab world by the Fatimids was an astounding feat. The fact that they were able to hold them for two hundred years is almost a mystery. For with the excep-

tion of the first two caliphs ruling in Cairo, Mu'izz (d. 975) and 'Azīz (d. 996), they produced no ruler of distinction, and out of a total of eleven rulers, three were adolescents and four mere children at the time of their accession to the throne. As we have seen, their government was alien, both religiously and racially. They ruled by playing one corps of mercenaries against the other with the result that internecine wars between the various factions were rampant. The history of the court itself was marked by foul intrigues, cruel executions, and treacherous assassinations. As from the second quarter of the eleventh century, the chief ministers either followed each other with maddening rapidity or usurped absolute rule for themselves. Despite all this, Egypt was a rich and flourishing country, the most prosperous among the kingdoms of Islam. As such it is described by contemporary travelers, whose impressions are confirmed, or at least not contradicted, by the Geniza records. How was this marvel of a prosperous society living under an unsatisfactory system of government achieved?

The Fatimid miracle (which is by no means unique in history) is to be largely explained by two circumstances: the comparatively little interference by the governments in the trade of their subjects—a fact also manifested in the reasonable customs tariffs—and the generally favorable situation created by the growing needs of an economically rising Europe, with Egypt and Syria serving as distribution centers and largely also as suppliers. In fairness to the Fatimids one has to add that their elaborate system of administration, which was organized with almost scientific precision, also contributed much to their success. To be sure, Egypt was already the classical country of bureaucratic rule even in Pharaonic, Hellenistic, and Roman times, and much of the old order was carried over into the Islamic period. Still, it was the two first Fatimid caliphs of Egypt who laid the foundations of a new order that persisted despite the checkered fate and the frequent breakdown of the central government.

In this task, Mu'izz and 'Azīz were assisted by a great vizier, Ya'qūb (Jacob) Ibn Killis, who must, indeed, be regarded as the creator of the internal administration of the new empire. As his career is typical of the period, a few words are said here about him. He was a Jew from Iraq, who, like many other Easterners of the tenth century, moved westward, first to Ramle in Palestine, where he became a representative of the merchants, a position, as we shall see, comparable to that of the consuls in the Italian colonies in the Levant. He soon moved on to Egypt, where he attracted the attention of the ruler of that country by his honesty, astuteness, and efficiency. "Were he a Muslim, he would have been the right man for vizier," that ruler is reputed to have said of him. Ibn Killis understood and removed his congenital disability by embracing Islam, but had to leave the country soon in order to escape a plot against him by the vizier in office. He proceeded still further to the West, to Tunisia, where he was introduced to Mu'izz by some Jews of

the caliph's entourage. His description of Egypt's weakness bolstered Mu'izz in his determination to attack that country. The financial chaos following the conquest required bold measures and Ibn Killis, entrusted, together with another man, with the reorganization of taxes and finances, carried through a remarkable monetary reform. Mu'izz died soon afterward, and when Ibn Killis showed sound judgment in foreign affairs as well, he was appointed vizier, the first to hold such an office in Fatimid Egypt. He kept the post for thirteen years until his death in 991.[8]

Thus we have in Ibn Killis an example of western Asian talent promoting the rise of Muslim North Africa; of a member of the merchants' class organizing an empire; and also a representative of the liberal spirit of the Fatimid period. For, unlike renegades in less tolerant times, Ibn Killis made copious use of the talents of his former coreligionists, as well as of Christians, in the administration of the provinces, and this policy was continued by his Christian successor, who appointed a Jew as his deputy in Syria. It must be remarked that the caliph had to cede to popular pressure and finally removed both the Christian vizier and his Jewish deputy. We find, however, professing Christians and Jews in the highest positions in the Fatimid administration later on also.

An auxiliary element in Fatimid success was their highly developed and efficient propaganda. The sect that served them resembled in some respects a well-organized modern political party. The present-day Arabic term for propagandist is indeed the ancient Ismā'īlī word for missionary. The Fatimids had at their disposal a ramified organization reaching far beyond the frontiers of their own state. They knew how to make friends and how to influence public opinion. For example, al-Ḥākim (996–1021), the interesting psychopathic caliph, who ordered the destruction of churches and synagogues and the forceful conversion or expulsion of Christians and Jews, is described, shortly before this event, in a poetical Hebrew "scroll" as a messianic prince of justice and peace, and similar praise is found in a Christian writer.[9] The viceroy al-Malik al-Afḍal (1095–1121), the first Fatimid commander to encounter the Crusaders, was certainly a capable man. Still, the overenthusiastic praise extended to him even by foreigners passing through Egypt seems to echo skillful propaganda, as when a French Jew (a certain Benveniste from Narbonne) places him in Paradise together with the pious kings from the house of David, or when a Maghrebi pilgrim writes of him, that no king had ever spread justice in the world as he had done.[10]

The most effective reason for the long rule of the Fatimids, it seems, was the general state of the Mediterranean region during the period under discussion: there was no other power strong enough to dislodge them. This does not mean that peace prevailed along the borders of the Fatimid empire. On the contrary; war was waged almost without

interruption, especially in Palestine and Syria, which never enjoyed even short respites during this whole period. For the first hundred years, the Fatimids tried in vain to pacify and dominate this region and to hold it against petty local rulers, recalcitrant cities, belligerent sects, and rapacious Bedouin chieftains, the latter, as always in turbulent times, being the most terrible scourge for the sedentary population.

Then, in the third quarter of the eleventh century, a new element appeared on the scene: the Seljuk Turks. The central Asian Turks had been a dominating factor in the history of the Arabic-speaking countries since the ninth century. Many of the best Fatimid generals had been Turks. All these, however, had been individuals, mostly imported as slaves and often retaining this status legally, even after having been appointed to responsible posts of command. The novelty of the Seljuk invasion was that a whole Turkish people was now on the move to conquer most of western Asia on its own. In 1055 Baghdad was taken, and when Syria and Palestine were attacked by them, there was no Fatimid army available to defend these countries, for, as usual, order had to be restored in faction-torn Egypt itself. In 1071, Jerusalem was conquered by the Seljuks, and five years later Damascus (which had withstood previous assaults)—never to be regained by the Fatimids.

Considering the fate of Syria and Palestine during the century preceding the Crusades, we are able to appreciate that the local population viewed the newcomers from Europe in a way very much different from what we would anticipate. Having been accustomed to incessant warfare and tribulations by ever new invaders, the man in the street was unable to recognize the particular character of the Crusaders' movement.[11] He was not to be blamed for this, for the most competent Muslim ruler of that time, the aforementioned al-Malik al-Afḍal, made the same mistake. He welcomed the Crusaders as his natural allies against the Seljuks and hurried to lay siege on Jerusalem at the time when the "Franks" (as the Crusaders were called in the East) consolidated their position in northern Syria. He conquered the city in September, 1098, but failed to provide it with an adequate garrison so that it fell an easy prey to the Crusaders in July, 1099. The Fatimid governor was given safe conduct with his whole entourage (including the Jews who were in government service), but the Crusaders followed up their victory with an attack on the main Fatimid army, which was ignominiously routed. A quarter of a century of war with changing fortunes ensued. By 1124, the whole of the Syro-Palestinian coast, with the sole exception of Ascalon in southern Palestine, was in the hands of the Crusaders. Finally, in 1153, at a time when the Fatimid court was disgraced by a series of incredible atrocities, even this last stronghold fell to the Franks, and the way was open for them to take the offensive against Egypt itself.

Meanwhile, however, a new power had emerged in western Asia. The Seljuk empire had disintegrated shortly before the arrival of the Cru-

saders—this event indeed made their victory possible. Out of the debris, some new kingdoms arose, one of which was to play a major role in Mediterranean history: that of Nur al-Din Zengi, the grandson of a Turkish mamluk (slave-soldier) and originally lord of Aleppo and Mosul. By taking Damascus in April, 1154, he obtained control of all Syria (with the exception of the Crusaders' states). Nur al-Din was the first representative of a new type of ruler of Turkish descent who made a great impact on the history of the Middle East. He was a fearless soldier and great commander and a staunch supporter of Muslim orthodoxy and learning. He hated the infidels, but made a serious effort to conduct his government in justice. "If his own son and a Jew would appear before him, and his son was wrong, he would not hesitate to decide in favor of the Jew."

The conquest of Ascalon by the Crusaders in 1153, and the annexation of Damascus by Nur al-Din in 1154, were almost simultaneous. Since the Fatimid government was entirely disabled because of internal strife, only those two powers remained on the southeastern shore of the Mediterranean. Soon the race for Egypt began between the two. For whoever would succeed in taking it, would be able to overcome the other with the help of its great resources. A confusing series of entangled political maneuvers and military clashes ensued. In general, the Fatimid counselors were inclined to prefer the Franks, in the correct assumption that these would be content with some kind of suzerainty, while Nur al-Din's Turks would try to abolish the Fatimid caliphate altogether and occupy the country for themselves. The Franks committed unpardonable blunders and atrocities, however, the worst of which was the unprovoked ghastly massacre of the inhabitants of Bilbays, a town near Cairo, on November 3, 1168. The scales turned in favor of Nur al-Din, who again had sent an army to Egypt, after two previous trials had failed. A member of this expedition was the famous Saladin, who soon was to become the leading personality in the eastern Mediterranean for most of the remaining part of the twelfth century.

As sometimes happens in the life of a genius, a series of favorable coincidences gave Saladin opportunity to rise to power. His uncle, the commander of Nur al-Din's expeditionary force, was appointed vizier of the Fatimid state, but passed away shortly after his appointment, leaving his nephew to take his place. When Saladin dared to depose the weak and sick Fatimid caliph, the latter died before even becoming aware of his deposition, which spared Saladin the invidious task of doing away with him. Finally, and most important of all: Nur al-Din, Saladin's overlord, who was rightly suspicious of his successful general, was also gathered in to his forefathers at the right moment, and Saladin was able to seize his kingdom. With Egypt, Syria, and northern Mesopotamia in his hands, he turned against the Crusaders and, after some vicissitudes of fortune, dealt them a crushing defeat. Jeru-

salem was recovered on October 2, 1187, and, with the exception of Tyre, the entire Syro-Palestinian coast was seized as well.

It is characteristic for the situation in the Mediterranean at that time, or perhaps for the significance of naval power in general, that the possession of one single fortified seaport enabled the Christians to resume the Crusades and to become again a power to be reckoned with in the Levant. Under Saladin himself, there was a marked decline of Muslim seapower. He had started out by making extensive use of naval operations, both in the Red Sea and, in particular, in the Mediterranean. As late as 1180, he had been able to force King Baldwin of Jerusalem to make peace by harassing the Syro-Palestinian coast with his Egyptian navy. But in 1191, after the bitter experience of the Third Crusade, he found himself forced to order the destruction of Ascalon, the flourishing seaport of southern Palestine, because he saw no other way of protecting this vital point from attack by European fleets.

Under his successors, Egypt itself was invaded from the sea. When, in 1219, Damietta, the great seaport at the mouth of the eastern branch of the Nile was about to fall, the Muslims offered to surrender the kingdom of Jerusalem if the Crusaders were prepared to leave the Egyptian coast. The fact that this ostensibly attractive offer was turned down, is taken by some scholars as an indication that a new period of history had begun, when the lust for colonial expansion replaced the zeal for the Holy War. This view can hardly be maintained. The papal legate, who was the official commander of the expedition, was the most adamant among those refusing the Muslim offer, and thirty years later, Louis IX of France, the most Christian of all Christian kings, also directed his Crusade against the Egyptian coast. Rather it seems that, while religious and worldly motifs were intermingled from the very beginning of the Crusaders' movement, in the course of time, the leaders from western Europe had become more familiar with the strategy of warfare in the eastern Mediterranean and tried to create a broader base from which to protect the kingdom of Jerusalem.

Both in 1219 and in 1249, Damietta was taken. But both conquests were vitiated by fantastic errors and subsequent military disasters. Crusader wars were fought on a smaller scale for about another half a century. But not until Napoleon set sail for Egypt in May, 1798, was a conquering army led again from the lands of the Franks to the shores of the Levant.

Saladin, the champion of Islam, was a ruler of a type similar to that of his former overlord Nur al-Din, but he was a greater man and was recognized as such by eastern and western contemporaries. The fact that he was a Kurd had considerable influence on the composition of his armies and in particular of his officers' corps; otherwise, it had even less significance for the character of his kingdom than the presence of Berbers in Fatimid Egypt.

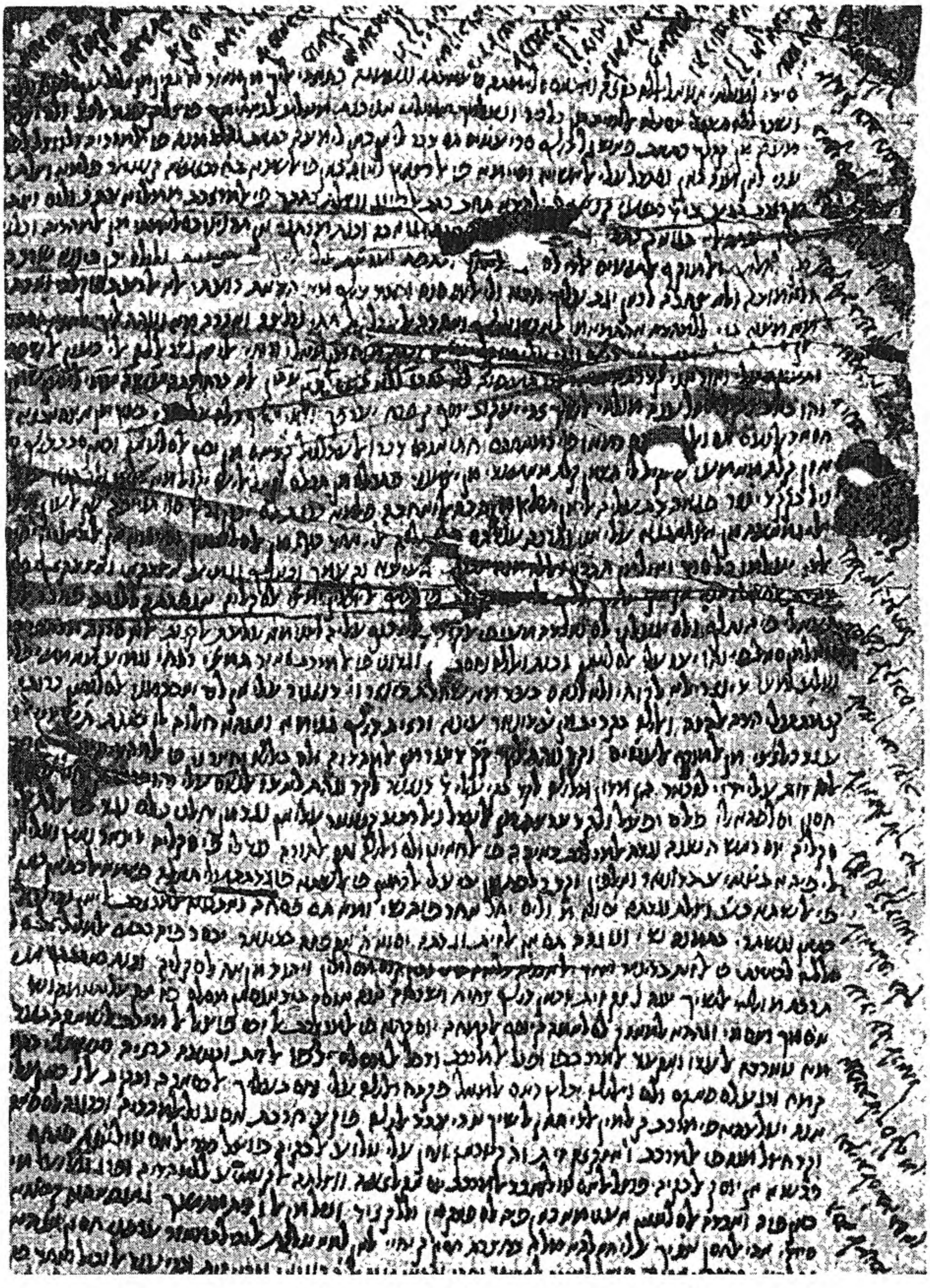
The dynasty founded by him, the Ayyubids (1171–1250)—so called after Ayyūb (the Arabic form of the biblical name Job), Saladin's father—represents a period of transition. The system of slave soldiers, although an ancient Islamic, and indeed, pre-Islamic institution, became even more developed under them, and Saladin himself was called a mamluk by his Muslim adversaries. The final eclipse of Egyptian seapower under Saladin has already been mentioned. Even more significant was the general character of the Ayyubid period. On the one hand, we encounter a spirit of mounting religious strictness, if not intolerance, but, on the other hand, much of the mundane and liberal attitude of the two preceding centuries still prevailed. Both these aspects are discernible in the Geniza papers. The ancient discriminatory laws were renewed or their renewal was attempted, while the Sultans and their entourage were still in close contact with people of other creeds, and amiable, and sometimes even cordial relations existed between both sides.[12]

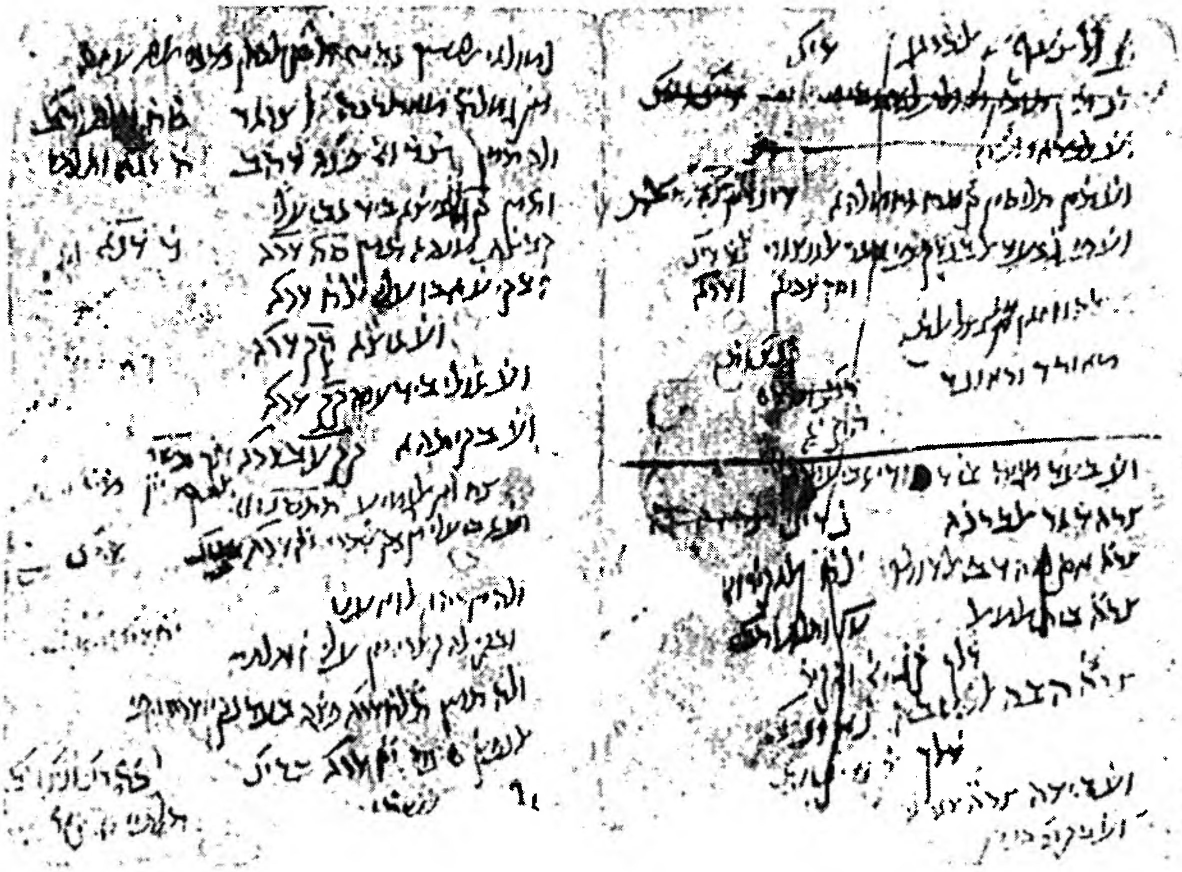
With the advent, in 1250, of the Mamluks as rulers of Egypt and Syria, bigotry and fanaticism became paramount. The organization of that great state of slave soldiers, which maintained itself by continuous import of vigorous men from distant countries, was in many respects very remarkable. But their government was perforce artificial and oppressive and, like other artificial and oppressive governments, it tried to satisfy its subjects by yielding to their lowest instincts. The Geniza reflects the unsatisfactory situation by a number of examples and perhaps even more by its overall silence.

The Mamluks turned their backs to the Mediterranean. Following Saladin's example they dismantled, and in many cases destroyed, the seaports and laid waste much of the coastal region in order to discourage attacks by European navies. This turning away from the Mediterranean scene by a soldiers' caste, which had its roots in central Asia, in the Russian steppes and the Caucasus, was of more than military significance.[13]

Another great seapower of the eastern Mediterranean which declined quickly during this period was Byzantium. The second part of the tenth century, which saw the conquests of the Fatimids, was also the heyday of Byzantine ascendancy. The island of Crete was taken in 961, Cyprus in 965, and Antioch with its seaport Suwaydiyya in 969, the same year in which the Fatimids conquered Egypt. Thus, the maritime bastions dominating the eastern Mediterranean, as well as the borderlands between Asia Minor and Syria, were again in the hands of the Rūm, the "Romans," as the Byzantines designated themselves and were called by the Muslims, although their language was Greek, and as Greeks they appeared to the Christians of western Europe. It was inevitable that the two great eastern powers, Byzantium and the Fatimids, should clash. But these clashes never developed into major wars of long duration. This owed partly to the fact that

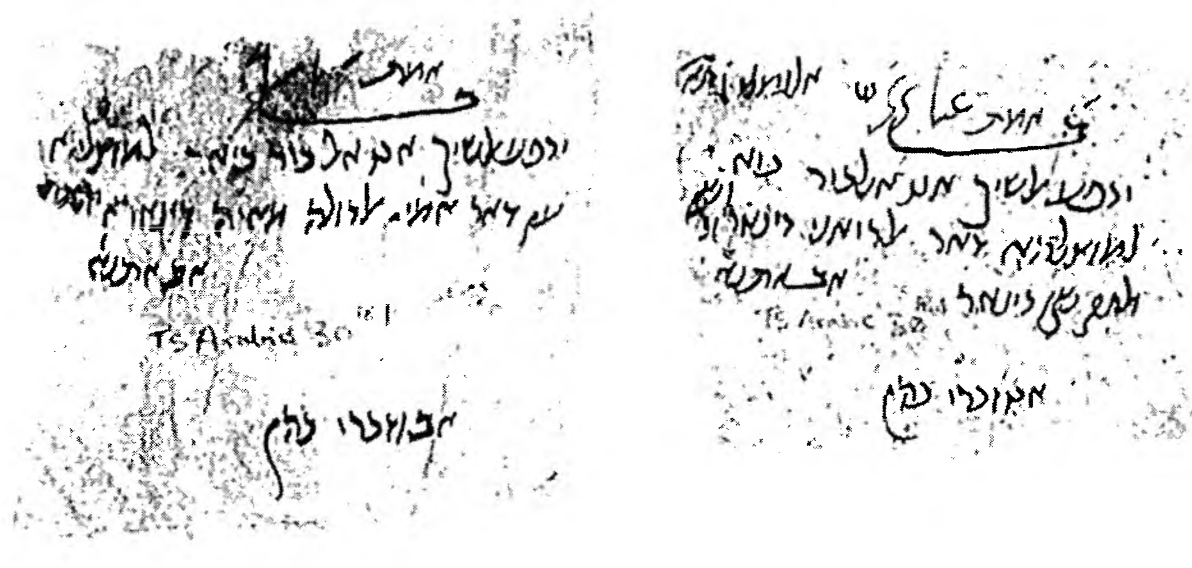
1. Opening of a 4,000-word letter from Sicily, describing how the writer faced death in a civil war in Tunisia and then dealing with business matters (*ca.* 1064). Quoted 30 times in this volume. (Dropsie College, Philadelphia, no. 389.)



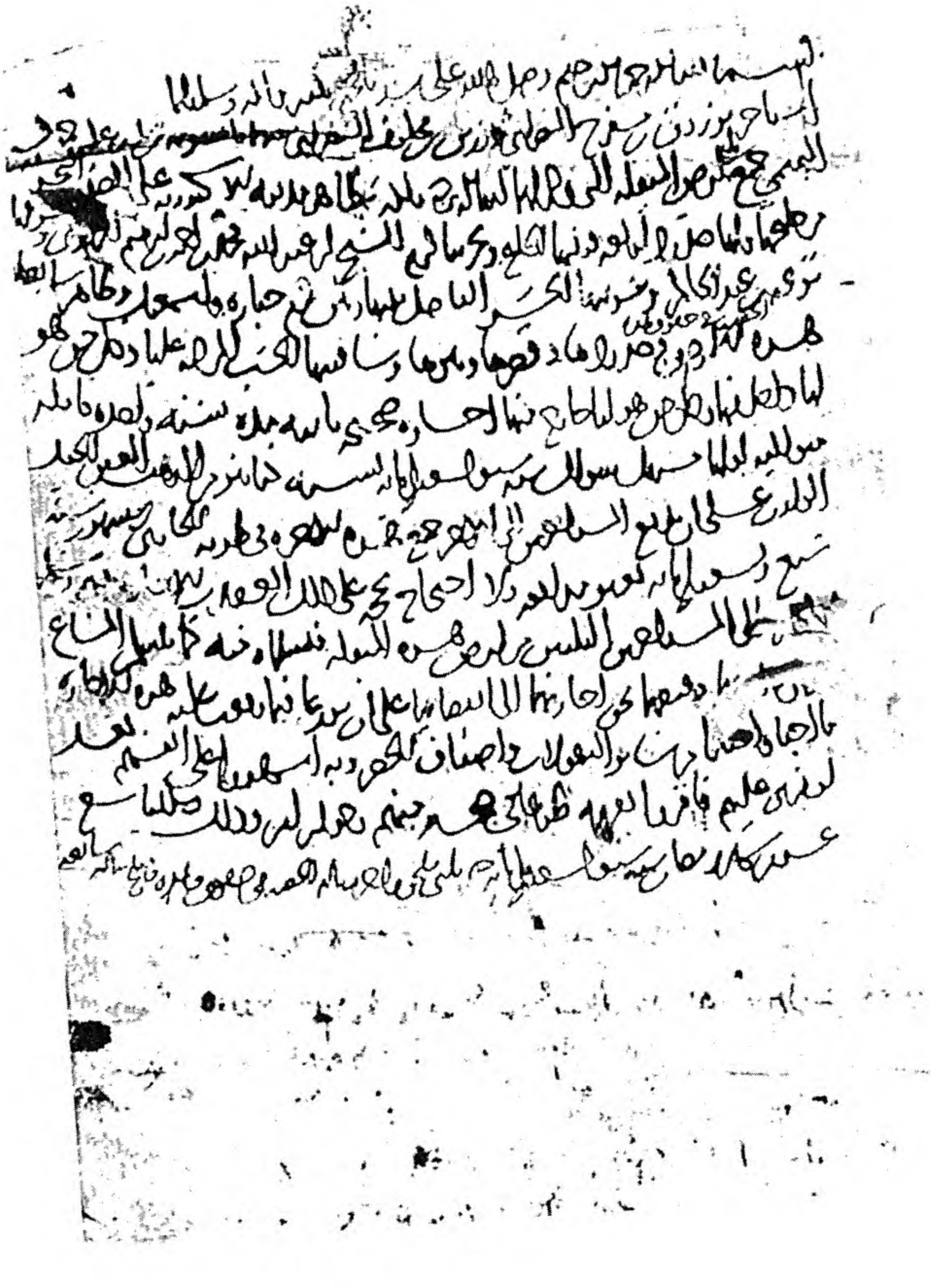


2. Accounts in the hand of Nahray b. Nissīm (*ca.* 1070). Note the two holes on each page (for filing) and the three on the fold (for binding in). See p. 206. (University Library, Cambridge, TS Arabic Box 30, f. 215.)

3. Two orders of payment, issued by Abū Zikrī Kohen in summer, 1140. The one on the left was worth 100 dinars. See p. 241. (University Library, Cambridge, TS Arabic Box 30, f. 184.)



4. Contract written by a Muslim notary. Two Christians lease a vegetable garden from a Muslim. Alexandria, 1103. The reverse side contains a family letter in Hebrew characters. See p. 119. (David Kaufmann Collection, Budapest, no. 2.)



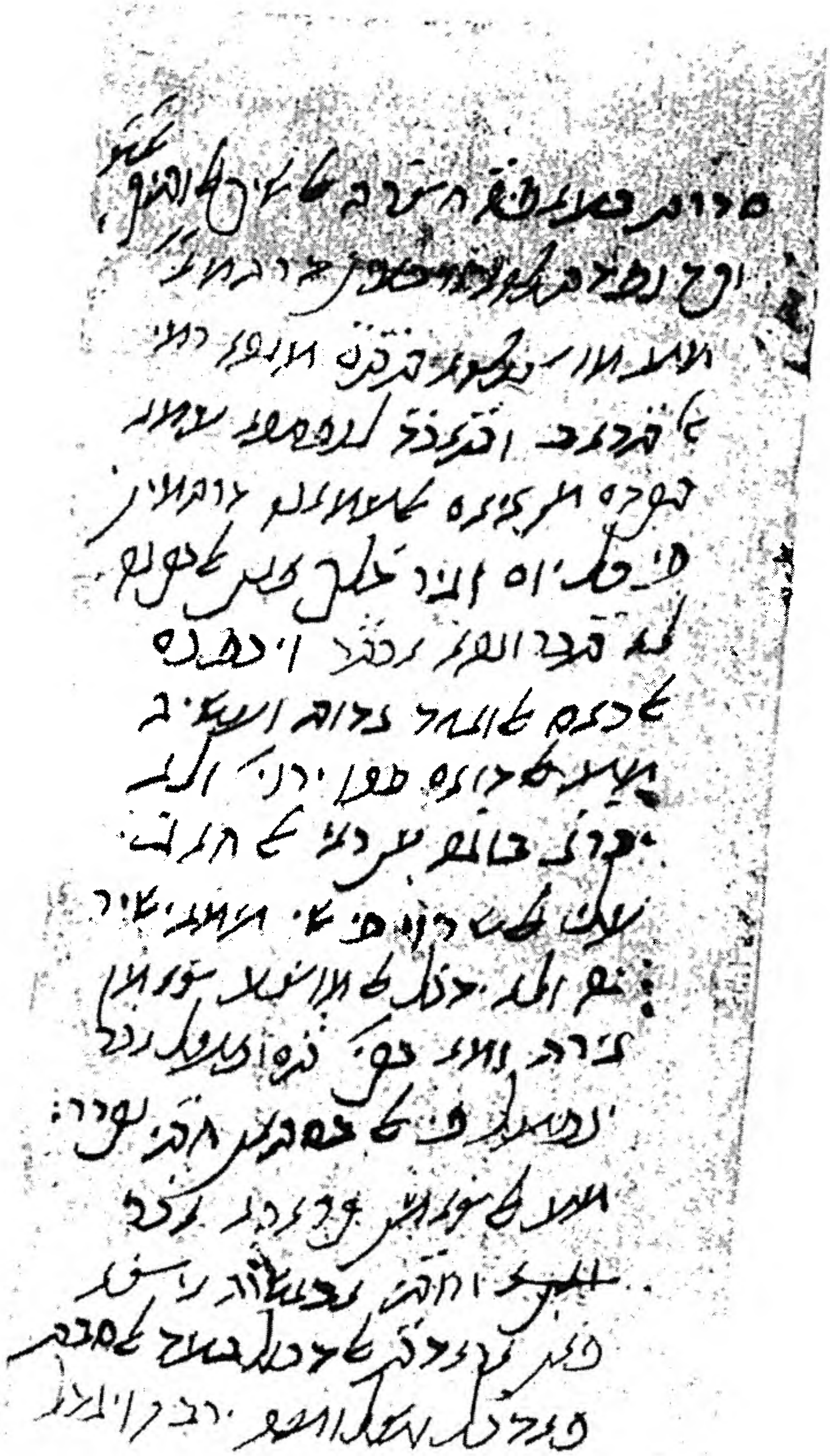
5. Page from a record book of the rabbinical court in Fustat, summarizing two sessions dealing with a dispute arising from a business venture to Upper Egypt (March, 1098). See p. 10. (Westminster College, Cambridge, Fragm. Cair. 50*v*.)



6. Letter from Spain. The poet Judah ha-Levi writes about his chef-d'oeuvre, the Kuzari, and expresses his wish to travel to the Holy Land. (Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York, ENA, Uncat. 41.)



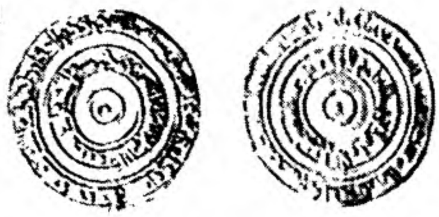
7. Note in the handwriting of Maimonides, containing instructions on communal affairs and medical advice. (University Library, Cambridge, TS 10 J 20, f. 5.)



8. (Courtesy Dr. George C. Miles, Chief Curator, The American Numismatic Society.)

Fatimid gold coins, the dollars of the tenth and early-eleventh centuries: (*1*) dinar, struck under al-ʿAzīz in al-Mahdiyya, 980–981; (*2*) dinar, struck under al-Mustanṣir, Fustat, 1036–1037.

1



2



The quarter dinars of the West: (*3*) struck under al-Muʿizz in al-Manṣūriyya, a suburb of Qayrawān, 962–963; (*4*) Norman quarter, the tari, Messina, 1140–1141 (note the cross).

3

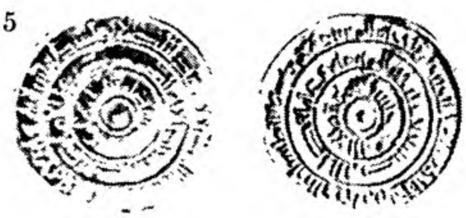


4



Dinars of Palestine: (*5*) struck in Ramle, 1051–1052 (legends in concentric lines); (*6*) struck in Acre, 1079–1080 (legends in parallel lines).

5



6



Fatimid silver: (*7*) dirhem of al-Mustanṣir, Cairo, 1077–1078; (*8*) fractional dirhem (one-half or less) of al-Ḥākim (ruled 996–1021).

7



8



The silver of the West: (*9*) Spanish (Umayyad) dirhem, 1010–1011; (*10*) dirhem of Ceuta (Sabta), Morocco, 1024–1025.

9



10



Murâbiṭ money, the international currency of the late-eleventh and the twelfth centuries (almoravidis): (*11*) dinar of Fez, Morocco, 1130–1131; (*12*) silver qîrâṭ of Ceuta (Sabta), *ca.* 1128–1138.

11



12



Ayyubid depreciation: (*13*) Nâṣirî dirhem of Saladin, Cairo, 1190–1191; (*14*) Broken dirhems passing as legal tender.

13



14



smaller principalities soon acted as buffer states between the two. There also seems to have been, at least on the Fatimid side, an element of deliberate policy. When the wise vizier Ibn Killis lay on his deathbed, he was asked by his caliph for political advice. He counseled to exterminate the unruly Bedouin chiefs, but to keep peace with the Romans, as long as they consented to so do. In general, the Fatimids followed this advice, and ten-year armistice treaties—a longer commitment is not allowed according to Muslim law—were concluded and renewed. Clearly, the two rich empires were the elements of stability in the area.

There were also other circumstances that prevented Byzantium and the Fatimids from fighting each other with an all-out effort. During most of the eleventh century neither had competent rulers strong enough to organize far-flung military operations, and, in the second part of the century, both were menaced by a common foe, the Seljuk Turks. In the same year, 1071, when one branch of that warlike people snatched Jerusalem away from the Fatimids, its main army vanquished and captured the Byzantine emperor. Asia Minor, the heartland of Byzantium, lay open to Turkish invasion.

Here, however, we must be careful not to view this crucial period too much in the light of later developments. We now know that the year 1071 was the beginning of the end, that it inaugurated that long process of the penetration of Asia Minor by peoples of Turkish race, which ended, in the twenties of our own century, with the total disappearance from there of anything Greek. But what proved in the long run to be a radical change, naturally appeared to the contemporaries as only one of many setbacks that were inevitable for an empire that was open on all sides to the attacks of barbarian peoples. Shortly after the defeat of 1071, Byzantium recovered and gained strength, being ruled successively by three astute and strong emperors, father, son and grandson, Alexius, John, and Manuel Comnenus (1081–1180), all three familiar to the students of western European history because of their close connection with the Crusaders and the Latin states established by the latter. It is indicative of the prosperity and the prestige enjoyed by the Byzantine Empire during the first half of the twelfth century that Jews emigrated there in considerable numbers from the Fatimid countries, as we learn from the letter of an Egyptian physician who settled in Asia Minor and from other Geniza sources.[14]

Manuel, the last of the three great Comneni, perhaps erred in attempting to restore Byzantine suzerainty in the seas and countries west of Greece. In any case, it was as the result of an attack from the West, and not the East, that Constantinople succumbed in 1204 and that Byzantium lost its position as a Mediterranean power altogether.

In the West, the dominating feature was the rise of the Italian maritime cities on the one hand, and the foundation and development of the Norman kingdom of the "two Sicilies" (Sicily and southern

Italy) on the other. The rule over this kingdom by the German emperor Frederic II, who was himself a native of southern Italy (1194–1250) marked in many respects the end of the High Middle Ages. Even the syncretistic character of the civilization of Frederic's Sicilian kingdom, where Byzantine, western European, and Muslim Arabic elements mingled freely, is characteristic of the preceding rather than of the following period. Conversely, the reign of Louis IX of France (1226–1270), Frederic's younger contemporary, although himself an embodiment of all medieval ideals—we have already seen him on his crusade to Egypt; he died on another crusade to Tunisia—ushers in a new epoch, that of national states, which formed the frames for the development of national cultures.

During most of the eleventh century, the Italian city-states, with the exception of Venice, Lucca, Salerno, and Amalfi, were still outside the horizon of the Geniza papers. All seafaring was done on ships whose proprietors, whether Muslims, Christians, or Jews, bear Arabic or Arabicized names. In the twelfth century, however, it was common for the people represented in the Geniza records to travel on Genoese, Pisan, Gaetan, and other Rūm ships, while Venetian ships are also mentioned, although not as used by Jews.[15] The struggle for Sicily and southern Italy, in which Byzantines, Muslims, local Italians, and Normans took part, as well as the successful attacks of the two latter on various points of the North African coast, is copiously reflected in the Geniza.

Despite the close connections between the Jews of southern France (Narbonne, Lunel, Montpellier, Arles, Marseilles) and those of the Muslim East, no references to political or other events in that area have been found in the Geniza, if we disregard accounts about hardships endured by Jewish individuals or communities. Only Marseilles is mentioned as a port from which one sailed directly to Egypt.

Of all the countries of the Mediterranean, Spain witnessed the most drastic changes during this period. Near the end of the tenth century the situation around the Mediterranean appeared to be one of great stability: a strong Byzantium dominating the northeast, a Fatimid empire stretching from Syria to the borders of Morocco, and Umayyad Spain being ruled by the powerful viceroy al-Manṣūr ("The Victorious"), who, in fifty military expeditions, assured an almost unchallenged ascendancy over the Christian principalities of northern Spain and over the towns and tribes of most of Morocco. We have already seen how fast both Byzantine and Fatimid power declined. The Umayyad caliphate disappeared altogether within one generation after the death of al-Manṣūr, which occurred in August, 1002. The great Christian reconquest of Spain began to assume unprecedented dimensions. It was checked twice by mighty Berber kingdoms, which successively occupied and protected Muslim Spain, the Almoravids and the Almohads. In both cases, however, the Berbers lost their vigor after

comparatively short periods of glorious achievements. With the fall of Seville, then the capital of Muslim Spain, in November, 1248, the whole Iberian Peninsula again became a Christian domain; even the small Muslim kingdom of Granada in the southeastern corner of the country, which miraculously survived for another two and a half centuries, was under the suzerainty of the Christian kings of Castilia, while all the attempts of the sultans of Morocco to renew the attack on Spain remained abortive. The Straits of Gibraltar, which had formed a most frequented bridge between Africa and Europe for six hundred years, became a barrier between the two continents by the end of the thirteenth century.

The history of North Africa itself was characterized during this period by great population movements: first, the invasion of the Arab tribes of the Hilāl and Sulaym, already described as a fatal blow to Tunisia's prosperity. The invaders finally penetrated into most parts of North Africa and contributed much to its general decline, but also to its progressive Arabization. Almost coinciding with this movement was another, coming from the opposite direction, originating deep in the southwestern Sahara in a subsection of the Berber people of the Ṣanhāja (from which modern "Senegal" is derived). Basically a Muslim religious movement, spawned by missionary border warfare, the Almoravids (Arabic al-Murābiṭ, "border warfarer"), soon flooded the whole of Morocco and western Algeria and conquered even Muslim Spain, fighting Christians and Muslims alike (1061–1147). They were superseded by another, even more powerful Berber kingdom, the Almohads (Arabic al-Muwaḥḥid, "a true believer in one God") (1130–1269; ousted from Spain around 1229). Their nucleus was a religious sect of extreme puritanic and traditionalistic tendencies, which regarded all Muslims who did not adhere to their dispensation, including the caliphs of Baghdad, as unbelievers and left to Christians and Jews the choice only between Islam or the sword. When we find, in a country that had produced St. Augustine, that no local Christians were left, the Almohad persecution is largely to blame, whereas the Jews of North Africa were too numerous to be totally submerged. This religious movement started within a Berber people, too, and led to great population shifts. The Almohads conquered Morocco, Algeria, and Muslim Spain, and also Tunisia and Tripoli (Libya), from which the Normans were finally driven out. At the beginning, the movement had a distinct national tenor, using the Berber language even for the literary expression of religious ideas. But the crude Berber dialect was not in a position to compete with the accomplished diction and terminology of classical Arabic. Consequently, even this greatest of all Berber kingdoms did not succeed in making, or keeping, North Africa a Berber entity.

The terrible sufferings endured by the civil population in the wake of the three cataclysms described have left their mark in the Geniza. These upheavals encouraged and brought to a climax the migration of

middle-class people from the Muslim West to the East, which was characteristic of the eleventh and the twelfth in contrast to the preceding centuries. How the civil population fared during such turbulent times is the subject of this book.

## 2. INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

Seeing that so many different states, races, and religious dispensations existed side by side or succeeded each other in the area and period under discussion, one wonders whether the term Mediterranean scene should be applied to them at all. We might ask: Did the peoples of the various countries have incentives and opportunities to meet and mix with each other, or did the many boundaries and enmities strangle their mobility and free movement? Were there any bonds of unity which encompassed the whole or the greater part of the Mediterranean area, or was each country and religious persuasion confined to its own parochial existence? I try to answer these questions, insofar as the Geniza records contribute to their elucidation.

There is no specific word for "Mediterranean" in the Geniza records. The ancient Arab term "The Sea of the Romans" (as opposed to "The Sea of the Indians," the Indian Ocean) never occurs in them, and one has the impression that in the writings of the Muslim geographers of this period it appears as a traditional scientific term rather than a name in living use.[1] The Mediterranean was "The Sea" par excellence, and as such, of course, it is mentioned in our records countless times.

As long as one traveled on the Mediterranean, one was, so to speak, within one's own precincts and never beyond reach. A merchant from Būna (Bône in Algeria), who wanted to collect debts in Old Cairo a few days prior to the date they fell due, pretended that he was traveling to Yemen in South Arabia. As soon as it became apparent that he had departed for Algeria, the debtor was furious: "Had I known that he was going only to the West, I would not have paid him a thing."[2] Conversely, a debtor in Old Cairo who was unable to meet his commitments would flee to 'Aydhāb, the great port on the coast of the Red Sea: the Mediterranean was much too frequented to provide a refuge.[3] A journey from Spain to Egypt or from Marseilles to the Levant was a humdrum experience, about which a seasoned traveler would not waste a word.[4] Commuting regularly between Tunisia or Sicily or even Spain and the eastern shores of the Mediterranean was nothing exceptional: "I am astonished that he has not come around Passover [Easter], as he is accustomed to do," says a letter from Alexandria with regard to a merchant from Tunisia,[5] and there are numerous cases of persons from Qayrawān or Palermo or Seville of whom we read that they made similar journeys repeatedly.[6] A merchant suffering from a chronic disease would not think a trip from

Egypt to Constantinople too trying (he was, however, kept there by his illness for two and a half years).[7] In short, the Mediterranean was a *pontos euxeinos,* a friendly, inviting sea—a fact, to be sure, stated by the Geniza letter writers only when they had the opportunity to see another sea, the frightening Indian Ocean.[8]

The Mediterranean area was divided into three great regions:

1. "The East," namely Egypt and the Muslim countries of southwestern Asia. This term was not very much used. Normally, the country or locality intended was specified, even in letters written by western people.[9]

2. "The Muslim West," al-Maghreb, comprising all North Africa west of Egypt, including Muslim Sicily, with Andalus, or Spain, forming a subsection. This term is annoyingly common, so that often we do not know whether the person or merchandise referred to came from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Sicily, or Spain.

3. "The Land of the 'Romans,'" al-Rūm, originally designating Byzantium, but used vaguely for Christian Europe and its peoples in general well into the twelfth century.

The term Ifranj, "the Franks" for western Europe, already appears in the oldest Geniza papers, where, for example, the Italian town of Lucca is described in a Hebrew letter as being in the land of Firanga, which originally means the Frankish empire of Charlemagne.[10] But even in the eleventh century the term is still used very sparingly, for example, with regard to a traveler coming from France,[11] or when an eminent French Jewish scholar was called Isaac the Frank because he happened to bear the same first name as some distinguished contemporaries in Muslim countries.[12] When the Crusaders made their appearance, the term was applied to them, but only from the second part of the twelfth century were Rūm, Byzantium, and Ifranj, western Europe, distinguished clearly and regularly. From the beginning of the thirteenth century, France proper was designated as Ifransa, as opposed, for example, to then Christian Sicily,[13] while Ifranj retained its general meaning of western European. Thus, in a fifteenth-century Geniza paper, we find the expression: al-Ifranjī al-Janawī, "the Frank, the Genoese," and this with regard to an ambassador.[14] As is well known, this designation remained in popular use in the Levant up to the threshold of our own times.

Occasionally, especially in reports of the arrival of ships, the Muslim West and the European West were lumped together, as in the following passage of a letter from Alexandria, Egypt: "No one has arrived from the West: neither from Tripoli, nor from Sicily, nor from the land of the Rūm."[15]

The terminology betrays the existence of a deep barrier between the Muslim East and the Muslim West and between both and Europe (including Byzantine Asia Minor). When a person describes another as a Rūmī or a Maghrebī, without specifying his city or country, he shows

lack of familiarity with, or interest in, the latter's permanent or original domicile. Besides its geographical remoteness—the desert begins immediately west of Alexandria—the Muslim West differed from the East by being at that time predominantly Berber, as well as by its religious idiosyncrasies, described earlier. As regards the relations with the Rūm, the contrasts of religion and race were, of course, even stronger and they were accentuated by the difference of the languages and scripts in vogue on the northern and the southern shores of the Mediterranean.

Yet Europeans are present everywhere in the Geniza records and in the most variegated capacities. In the first place, naturally, as traders. As such they are found with equal frequency in the Muslim East and the Muslim West, and in the eleventh century not less than in the twelfth. Nor were they confined to the coastal towns. Thus we read in a letter sent from Alexandria to Old Cairo in the latter years of the eleventh century: "Please take notice that no pepper, cinnamon or ginger are available in Alexandria. If you have any of these commodities, keep them, for the Rūm [here: Byzantines] are keen solely on them. All the Rūm are about to leave for Old Cairo. They are only waiting for the arrival of two additional ships from Constantinople."[16] In another letter from the same town, written a little earlier, the writer asks his business correspondent in Old Cairo to hold his date palm fiber until the Rūm arrived there from Damietta, as they were expected to do according to information given to him.[17] Still earlier, around 1035, we hear of an unprecedented boom in odoriferous woods in Old Cairo because of the Rūm: "They did not leave a single piece of it when they departed for their country."[18] A "Market of the Greeks," situated in the "Castle of Edom," the ancient Roman fortress that formed the nucleus of the town of Old Cairo, is mentioned in a document from the year 959, a detail seemingly not noted by the Muslim geographers.[19] In Tunisia, too, business was done with the European merchants not only in al-Mahdiyya and other seaports, but in inland Qayrawān as well.[20]

The impact of the European trade on the local market was overwhelming. In Tunisia, as one ancient letter alludes, everything depended on the Rūm and on the Andalusians.[21] About the former, a price list from Tunisia states: "Pepper (a hundred pounds)—33 dinars, because of the demand for it by the Rūm." "The price of pepper," writes a man from al-Mahdiyya, "used to be 36, but is today 38; at least, this is how the Rūm buy it." "If the Europeans will be eager to purchase pepper, its price will be higher." "The Rūm bought the pepper because the ships [bringing the Andalusian merchants] were late." In another letter from the same town, the writer complains about the catastrophic price of the pepper (25 dinars) and adds that payment was made for it half in Sicilian and half in Pisan currencies, so that, in addition, an agio was required for converting the proceeds into local money. The five letters quoted are all from Tunisia, from the second

third of the eleventh century. Thus we see that the influence of the Europeans was substantial in fixing the market price and that they were sometimes able to impose payment in their own currencies.[22]

In Old Cairo, a similar situation prevailed. A letter containing price lists and other valuable economic data sent from Old Cairo to Aden on January 9, 1133, has the following to report: "This year, business is at a standstill, for no one has come from the West, and only a few Rūm [here: Byzantines] have arrived." [23] About thirty years earlier, another letter dispatched from Old Cairo to Aden strikes a similar note: "The Sultan [al-Malik al-Afḍal] imprisoned the Genoese, which caused great consternation among the Rūm [here: Europeans in general] and no goods can be sold because of this. It looks as if this recession will last long, so that everyone's business has come to a halt." [24] The imprisonment of the Genoese most probably was connected with the great Genoese exploits during the Crusaders' conquest of the Syro-Palestinian coastal cities (Caesarea, 1101; Acre, 1104; Tripoli, 1109; Beirut, 1110). That Genoese merchants should have frequented the marts of Old Cairo at a time when their fellow citizens attacked vital ports of the Fatimid empire, seems strange to us today, but was perhaps looked upon differently in the early years of the twelfth century.

To sell to Europeans was the dream of the local merchants. In a letter written in 1085, a Tunisian was reported to have made an excellent sale when he sold his brazilwood to Rūm in a Palestinian seaport at a profit of 150 percent. Brazilwood, just in passing, was one of the most common commodities traded at that time. The word, of course, has nothing to do with the country of Brazil, but is connected with the word brazier and means literally wood of flaming color. It is a wood grown in the East Indies, from which a valuable red dye was made.[25] Another much sought after article used in the dyeing industry, as well as in medicine, was potash alum. Approximately at the time of the letter just referred to, a merchant from Alexandria writes to his correspondent in Old Cairo: "The alum has not yet arrived [it came from Upper Egypt or from Yemen]. Here are Rūm; we shall offer it to them and we hope they will buy it." Alum is sold to the Rūm also in another contemporary letter.[26] When Egyptian flax, owing to the insecurity of the inland routes, did not find buyers in the southern Palestinian port of Ascalon, it was the customers from Europe who saved the day by demanding it eagerly.[27] In 1064, a letter from Sicily explains that "even" the Rūm present in Palermo were not prepared to buy the inferior black ginger offered to them. Thus it had to be sent on to another European country, where it was sold—not without loss.[28]

The 1064 incident shows that the Europeans were expected to be satisfied with second-rate merchandise. An even more telling example of the Rūm's strange ways in business is to be found in the following quotation from a letter from Alexandria (around 1060): "Of late, Rūm ships have arrived. Immediately after their arrival, their merchants

were very active. Then they kept back and did not show much eagerness. They bought indigo at the auction [literally: in the circle] for excessive prices and some brazilwood for 120 [dinars per camel load, also an exorbitant price]. Then they stopped. They do not distinguish between first-class and inferior goods; for every quality they pay the same price. Likewise, the flax—they buy the poor quality for the same price as the excellent and are not prepared to pay more for the latter. They are greatly interested [in flax, it seems] and say that other Rūm will soon arrive."[29]

In all the cases quoted, we find the Europeans as buyers, and it is noteworthy that the products sought by them were identical with those that also ranked foremost in the trade between the Muslim countries of the Mediterranean. But there was also a very lively export of Byzantine and western European goods to the Muslim area. This export, however, with few exceptions, such as cheese, was not handled by Jews. Therefore, we find records of it mostly in Geniza documents other than business letters, for example, in marriage settlements, which register the clothing, bedding, and furniture brought in by the bride as part of her marriage portion. Thus a Jewish bride in the Muslim East could not do without a Rūm kerchief (*mandīl,* or *mindīl,* derived from the same Latin root as Spanish *mantilla* or English *mantle*), whether this was in Damascus, 956, or in Old Cairo in the years 1040, 1050, 1067, 1115, and later.[30] Richer brides would have a Rūm brocade bedcover, worth, on the average, 10 dinars (a sum large enough to sustain a middle-sized family for five months), or even a Rūm brocade couch. Reference to these cherished items is found, for example, in documents dated 1031, 1034, 1050, 1064, as well as about a hundred years later in 1155, all from Old Cairo.[31]

As wood was scarce in the Middle East, we are not astonished to find Rūm chests, cupboards, and bedsteads among the furniture mentioned in the Geniza, although their transport by sea must have been precarious in those times. Timber, of course, was a main export from Europe to the Muslim side of the Mediterranean. At the beginning of the twelfth century we find merchants from Amalfi and Genoa engaged in this trade, while at its end we hear of two Venetian ships carrying to Alexandria this material which was so indispensable in peace and in war.[32]

Cheese was the staple protein food for the poorer sections of the population in Egypt. To a large extent this also was imported from Christian Europe. We have dated references for the import of cheese from Sicily (Syracuse, 1241 and Messina, 1263), and information of many undated shipments from earlier centuries. Crete was also an exporter of cheese, and so was Rūm in general. A ship from Amalfi in southern Italy brought, besides silk, honey to Alexandria, and the European winesellers, so prominent in that Egyptian port, certainly carried the products of their native countries.[33]

From Roman times to our own, corals have been an article of export from the Mediterranean area to the countries of the Indian Ocean. This trade was particularly brisk during the period covered by the Geniza papers. The corals were collected partly from the Tunisian and partly from the European shores of the Mediterranean, whence they were sent to Egypt for reexportation. "No corals have arrived, so far, either from Rūm or the West," writes a merchant from Alexandria, a remark illustrative of the European share in this trade.[34] The frequent references to corals sent from Sicily are ambiguous, for in certain periods Tunisian exports were sent to Egypt via that island.

Another type of goods most conspicuous in the Geniza records was pharmaceutical products and preparations. As the science of pharmacology was first systematically developed by the Greeks and then taken over from them by the Muslims, it is natural that many plants growing in the countries of the ancient Greeks should figure prominently in the stock of a Muslim pharmacy. Thus, dodder of thyme (called in Arabic *afīthīmūn*, which is Greek *epi-thymon*, from which the English *thyme* is derived) was such an important medical plant that some of the ancients assumed that the art of medicine was invented in the island of Crete, because the best quality of that plant was found there. We indeed learn from the Geniza records that Crete epithymon was exported to Egypt, whence it was reexported to the countries of the Indian Ocean.[35]

Although the Europeans are normally mentioned in our records in the plural, we do not get the impression that they appeared solely as compact companies. Thus a letter from Old Cairo speaks about European merchants visiting the writer in his house, and in another, from Alexandria, we read about a complaint that certain Rūm had rented storehouses belonging to one merchant, but had left for their country without having paid for them. For reasons not stated, the governor of the city was not prepared to take action to redress that complaint.[36]

European shipping must have been conspicuous in Alexandria already in the early years of the eleventh century, for the Italian word *scala* for the plank used at the lading of a boat appears as an official term in an account from that city written around 1030: "Passing the *isqālā*, 100 bales (pay) 11-½ dinars (export dues)."[37]

There is no need to expatiate here upon the international trade between the Muslim countries of the Mediterranean area, for at least three-quarters of the business letters preserved in the Geniza deal with this subject. If we take into consideration the extent, instead of the number, of the letters concerned, the ratio would be as high as nine-tenths. It was mostly the international trade that necessitated detailed and lengthy records. In view of this, the business relations of the Muslim countries around the Mediterranean is treated in chapter iii, which is devoted to commerce and finance in general.

Because of the dangers and risks connected with seafaring and

traveling in foreign countries, business was largely conducted on the basis of mutual trust and friendship. The traveler was thus assured that his local business friends would do everything in their power in case something happened to him or his merchandise. These bonds of friendship were often strengthened by "diplomatic" marriages between families in countries far distant from each other. Thus the head of one of the leading Spanish Jewish families in the eleventh century, Samuel Lukhtūsh (a Berber name), was married to a lady from a great house in Old Cairo, which also had other family ties with Spain. We find members of the two families traveling between Spain and Egypt during both the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[38] The daughter of Elhanan b. Shemarya, the president of the Jewish College in Old Cairo, was married in Tunisia around 1020; Sahlān b. Abraham, the leader of the Iraqi Jewish community in that city, married the daughter of the Jewish chief judge of Sijilmāsa, Morocco, on September 9, 1037; and the daughter of Nissīm b. Jacob Ibn Shāhīn (a Persian name), the leading Jewish scholar of Qayrawān, was married to Joseph, the son of Samuel ha-Nagid, the Jewish vizier of the Berber king of Granada, Spain around 1050.[39] The representative of the merchants in Old Cairo during the second quarter of the twelfth century was married to the sister of a *nākhodā,* or shipowner, in Aden, South Arabia, while his own sister was the wife of the representative of the merchants in that town.[40] Marriages between families living in Palestine, Lebanon, or Syria and those in Egypt are referred to frequently in the Geniza records.[41] Even slaves, or freedmen doing business for their masters in different countries, contracted such unions.[42]

There were two other types of marriages connected with international trade and travel. An ancient Near Eastern maxim, which is echoed in French and other European proverbs, advises one to take a wife only from one's own town and social environment.[43] In compliance with this, young men often were married before they went overseas and their wives were fetched by them after they had established their position in the new country, in case, of course, they had not changed their mind and sent, instead, a letter of divorce.[44] Or, a mate would be selected for a young merchant abroad by a friend traveling home. Thus, in a letter written in Alexandria "on board the Sultan's ship," shortly before it set sail for Spain in May, 1116, the writer expresses his confidence that he would find the right spouse there for his friend, while he dissuaded him from looking for a wife in al-Mahdiyya. Clearly, the friend referred to was an inveterate "Westerner," who abhorred the idea of marrying an "Eastern" wife and therefore had prompted his acquaintances to arrange a match for him either in Spain or in Tunisia.[45]

Contrariwise, the safest way for a young man to build himself a strong position in a foreign country was to marry a girl from an influential family. Nahray b. Nissīm and Judah Ibn Sighmār, the two

Tunisian immigrants to Egypt most prominent in the Geniza, are illustrious examples, and lesser luminaries of a similar type, such as Zachariah b. Tammām, followed suit. The settlers in the Holy Land did the same. The scholar Faraḥ b. Dunash (a Berber name) from faraway Sijilmāsa married a girl from Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee, and another Maghrebi took one from 'Ammān (the capital of present-day Jordan). The renegade Samaw'al (Samuel) al-Maghribī tells in his autobiography that his father emigrated from Fez, Morocco, to Baghdad, where he married one of three learned sisters from Basra, whose mother belonged to a great family, represented in Iraq as well as in Egypt.[46] Sometimes we find the opposite situation, when the family back home was angry that their relative abroad married a poor girl, instead of making the right match. "Why did you let them marry you to an orphan, who lived in their house and served them," writes a man from Palermo, Sicily, to his relative in Alexandria. "Instead I would have made *them* your in-laws." The young man probably had his own reasons why he married the orphan instead of one of the daughters of the house.[47]

These relationships were by no means confined to Muslim countries. We learn about Jewish ladies from Egypt who were married in Crete or Romania (the European part of the Byzantine Empire) and whose children bore Greek names or who had adopted Greek names themselves. The Egyptian doctor settling in Byzantium, referred to above, page 22, married a native woman there and so did the many Europeans who took permanent or temporary domicile in Egypt. Since Jewish girls in Europe, but not in Egypt, were given the names of biblical heroines, children from such a union would bear double names: "Leah, who is called Thanā', and Sarah, who is called Sitt al-Kull" were the daughters of a scribe from the lands of the Rūm.[48]

The movement of craftsmen contributed less than that of commerce to the lively traffic around the Mediterrean in our period—or, at least, we do not hear about the former as much as about the latter. For, unlike merchants, artisans had little reason to leave us records about their activities. When a Rūm furrier, a Spanish shoemaker, or a dyer from Tiflis, today Tbilisi, Georgia, are listed as living in Old Cairo, we are perhaps justified in assuming that they emigrated in the hope that the high standard of their crafts in their countries of origin could serve as a recommendation for them while abroad. In documents on industrial partnerships in Fustat we find two cases of workmen from Tyre, one from Jerusalem, one from Damascus, and one from al-Mahdiyya. The many complaints against the competition by foreigners (reported p. 85, below) are another direct testimony for the migration of artisans.[49]

The trademarks of goods mentioned in our papers are another indication that skilled workers must have traveled from one end of the Mediterranean world to the other. Ṭālaqān was a town in faraway

northeastern Iran famous for its felt industry. But in the Geniza we find Ṭālaqān felt exported to Egypt—from Tripoli, Libya. By chance, a Muslim geographer has preserved the information that this material was successfully imitated in Qalʿa(t Ḥammād), then the capital of Algeria. Thus, the felt sent from Tripoli was either a reexport, or, more likely, was produced there itself.[50] Tustar in southwestern Iran was the center of a great textile industry and many of its products appear in our papers. In three cases registered so far, however, we find Tustarī cloths coming from the West, imported to Egypt by persons called Andalusī; thus, this cloth must have been produced either in Spain, or in some country in North Africa.[51] Āmidīs, that is, fabrics made in the style of Āmid, modern Diarbekr in eastern Turkey, were imported to Egypt from the Muslim West. This testimony of the Geniza has an interesting counterpart in a notice of a tenth-century Muslim geographer who tells us that in Āmid they made Byzantine linen in the style of Sicily. Both Sicily and Āmid once were parts of the Byzantine Empire. No wonder that within that state, art traveled from the utmost west to the east. In Islamic times, the process was reversed. The craftsmen of the east were attracted by a flourishing west. It is highly probable that the many persons called Āmidī appearing in the Geniza documents did not actually hail from that remote city, but were occupied with the manufacture or sale of fabrics bearing that name.[52] The example most common in the Geniza for the imitation of foreign material was upholstery from Ṭabaristān, the beautiful Persian province south of the Caspian sea, which was so widely reproduced in Egypt that genuine Ṭabaristāns were expressly characterized as such in marriage contracts. A Muslim antiquarian tells us that workshops producing this material existed in Fustat, and one inventory of a bride's trousseau lists a Ṭabarī Ramlī, that is, one made in Ramle, Palestine, or in an Egyptian locality bearing that name.[53]

It stands to reason that goods with such trademarks normally were manufactured by local craftsmen (as is the case, for instance, with Worcester cloth made in the United States). It is, however, probable that the art of designing them was taught first by artisans from the countries renowned for their production. This assumption is corroborated by the fact that so many persons in Egypt and Tunisia bore Persian names, as attested by the Geniza.

In the few cases in which we actually read about the emigration of craftsmen, it was either only indirectly connected with their professions or it had no relationship with them whatsoever. A Byzantine silk dyer went to Egypt after he had been accused of spoiling a precious fabric, whereupon he himself was almost tortured to death and his children were taken away from him as pawns. He hoped to obtain their ransom with the help of Cairene coreligionists.[54] When we find a silversmith from Ceuta, Morocco, in Sicily and later on in Egypt, and two other Moroccan silversmiths emigrating as far as Ceylon (via

Aden), we may assume that they fled from the Almohad terror, as is expressly stated in the first case and may be concluded in the second from the date of their travel.[55] Egypt was flooded with Syro-Palestinian dyers, glassmakers, and silk-weavers during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, so that the local artisans complained of competition. This influx, however, was certainly due to the almost permanent state of war prevailing in that region. Similarly, when Rūm tailors, cobblers, dyers, and goldsmiths appear in the lists of the poor in Old Cairo, it looks as if they had gone there simply as refugees. A little puzzling is the frequent presence of Rūm scribes in Egypt throughout the centuries. Perhaps the reason for this was that the Egyptian Jews themselves preferred to choose more lucrative occupations.[56]

As is well known, the enforced recruiting and transfer of craftsmen from one part of the caliphs' empire to another were very substantial factors in the development of a new, Islamic, style, particularly in architecture. Richard Ettinghausen has drawn our attention to the possible impact of itinerant artisans on the diffusion of traditions in the smaller arts, such as pottery and bookbinding.[57] In the Geniza records we see that craftsmen, for various reasons, at least traveled widely, which cannot have been without influence on the technique of work and the style of products. To quote an example from the craft of copyist: in a letter in a hand of exquisite beauty sent from a little town in Egypt to Old Cairo, the writer asks the addressee to have a scribe from Rūm living there copy out two squires and two leaves in order to complete a volume for a customer, which he himself had been unable to do while in the capital. It seems highly unlikely that a man who betrayed such style even in an everyday letter should have entrusted the completion of a codex written by him to a fellow copyist whose hand differed very much from his own. Thus we may assume that the presence of scribes from Europe in Egypt was conducive to a fusion of styles, which we are able indeed to observe in the Geniza. The writer of our letter, as may be gleaned from other details mentioned in it, seems to have been a Palestinian.[58]

This letter leads to another group that contributed so much to the international quality of the Mediterranean scene during the High Middle Ages, the scholars. "The wandering scholars" are a phenomenon familiar to any student of the medieval history of Christian Europe.[59] In Islam, the "seeking of knowledge" resulted in extensive travels, which are registered in the biography of practically every savant of renown. In Judaism, traveling for the sake of study was common even in antiquity, when Palestine formed the spiritual center for a diaspora spread over the entire civilized world. Around 200 A.D., Babylonia, later known as Iraq, became another great center of learning, which, in the course of time, outstripped Palestine. Commuting between these two centers was a constant feature of the pursuit of knowledge during the early Middle Ages. Later on, these "academies"

continued to be the goals of any scholar who could afford and who dared to make the journey, even if he himself was already an acknowledged authority. Thus a thirteenth-century French scholar of such standing that he had already served as a judge in the Jewish community of Alexandria, Egypt, took the trouble of making the long journey to Baghdad, where he died shortly after his arrival. As we may conclude from a dirge full of high praise for him composed by a local poet, his scholarship must have made a deep impression at the seat of the ecumenical Jewish academies.[60]

Another good example, antedating the one just cited by two hundred years, is provided by the story of Maṣlīaḥ b. Elijah, the Jewish judge of Palermo during the second quarter of the eleventh century. He was a renowned scholar whose legal opinions were sought and quoted together with those of his illustrious colleague in Qayrawān, R. Hananel, one of the greatest rabbinical authorities of all time. A volume of the responsa of the Sicilian judge was in the possession of an Andalusian merchant.[61] Maṣlīaḥ traveled to Egypt, where he traded in Sicilian silk, as well as to Palestine. Finally, he visited Baghdad, in order to study with Hay Gaon (d. 1038), "the spiritual father of all the [Jewish] scholars in the lands of Islam and Christendom." He was so impressed by the old master that he wrote a book about his way of life, one detail of which is noteworthy here. Once, Maṣlīaḥ asked Hay for the explanation of Psalm 141:5, the text of which is indeed extremely difficult. Hay, who had himself written a comprehensive dictionary of Hebrew, was also puzzled by an obscure phrase in that verse and sent Maṣlīaḥ on to the Catholicus, the head of the Nestorian church. Although such cooperation between Jewish and Christian biblical scholars is commonplace in our own times, one might not expect it to have existed in Baghdad nine hundred and fifty years ago. The Sicilian judge dedicated his biography of the great "Babylonian" scholar to the vizier Samuel ha-Nagid of Granada (see above, p. 48), most probably at the occasion of his visit to that Spanish town.[62]

Even more significant are the instances of scholars from the established seats of learning who wandered around visiting minor schools in order to add to their erudition. Thus we have an interesting letter from Alexandria by a "Babylonian" scholar, who, after ransacking the booksellers' stores of Egypt for rare books (including one by a Spanish author), decided to travel to Thebes and Salonika in Greece, as he had learned in Alexandria that they possessed notable schools adorned by fine scholars.[63]

Linguistic barriers did not deter travelers in search of knowledge. Latin in western Europe, classical Arabic in the countries of Islam, and Hebrew in the Jewish houses of learning everywhere made it possible for foreigners to take part anywhere in classes or even to lead them. We read above about the French scholar visiting Baghdad and about a Baghdadian traveling to Greece. Hay Gaon, the head of the academy

in Baghdad, had five students from Siponto, a little town in southern Italy, whose mother tongue was probably Greek or a Romanesque dialect. Once, when he had to answer a query from Qayrawān about a Greek legal term occurring in the Talmud, he answered: I asked the Greek-speaking scholars from Constantinople who study with me, and they confirmed that the term was still used in the sense found in the ancient sources.[64]

That great masters emigrated to foreign countries and founded new schools there has long been known from literary sources. It remained, however, for discoveries from the Geniza to present us with authentic and intimate accounts about such occurrences. Thus from it we learn how the famous school of Jewish learning in Qayrawān was founded at the end of the tenth century by an emigrant from Byzantine Italy, then famous for its schools, or how, two generations later, Jewish learning witnessed a revival in Old Cairo when a leading scholar from Tunisia took his residence there.[65] Under exceptional circumstances, the ecumenical academies, too, would choose a foreign scholar as their head. The most famous cases, of course, are those of Saadya (d. 942) from the Egyptian Fayyūm, who became Gaon in Baghdad, and of Isaac b. Moses of Spain, who did the same. The Geniza has revealed that the most prominent Gaon of the Jerusalem academy of this time, Solomon b. Judah (d. 1051), was not a native of Palestine, but originated from Fez in Morocco.[66]

It was not only the wish to acquire or to spread knowledge which caused men of learning to travel far afield, but also the simple need to make a living. Geniza papers of all descriptions, such as lists of emoluments, official and private correspondence, or legal deeds, indicate that judges, preachers, teachers, and cantors more often than not were of foreign origin. Of the three permanent judges of Cairo and Fustat who signed many important documents, one of which, dated August 11, 1114, is translated in *Mediterranean People*, one was an Andalusian and the two others originated from Palestine. Each of them served in this capacity in the Egyptian capital for about a generation. At the same time, the chief Jewish judge of Alexandria was a scholar from Der'a, a town in Morocco.[67] Most of the Jewish judges and academic teachers active in Egypt during the twelfth century had previously occupied similar positions in Palestine or Syria. At the end of the same century, Moses Maimonides of Cordova, Spain, was the highest legal authority of the Jewish community in the capital of Egypt and his opposite number in Alexandria was Anatoli (cf. modern French Anatole) of Marseilles who was preceded and followed by other judges from the land of the Franks, about whom we shall hear more later on.[68] A fourth Frankish scholar serving as judge in Alexandria approximately at that time has been mentioned above, page 52.

The wide geographical distribution of wandering scholars, as reflected in the Geniza papers, was not less impressive during the eleventh cen-

tury. In two, comparatively short, lists of scholars on the payroll of the Cairene community around 1075 the following foreigners are mentioned: two Frankish scholars, two from Palestine, two from Baghdad [69] and one from another town in Iraq, six foreign cantors from Spain, Rūm, Tyre (Lebanon), Aleppo, Baghdad and Palestine, respectively, a teacher from Acre, Palestine, and a scholar called "the son of the Bunduqī," which, at that time, could hardly mean anything else than "the man from Venice." The two lists are headed by Nahray b. Nissīm, the Qayrawānese scholar and businessman, who had settled in Egypt many years before. A third, still unpublished list, of the same type and time, and also headed by Nahray, includes, in addition to some of those listed before, one Ibn al-'Ammānī, from 'Ammān in the country east of the Jordan, and one Ḥijāzī, from northwest Arabia.[70]

Very characteristic in this respect is the following passage from a letter, addressed by a local scholar to the leader of the Jewish community in Old Cairo around 1030: "Many scholars come here from the Land of Edom [Europe] and from Palestine. Let me be like one of them. I am in great straits. Help me." A beautifully styled letter from Tyre from the later part of the eleventh century contains this complaint addressed to the Rōsh ha-Gōlā, or Head of the Diaspora, who had his seat in Baghdad: "Abū Isḥāq [the head of the local community] takes care of the Rūm [here: Byzantine] and Ifranj [West European] Jews, as well as of proselytes, but not of me, despite your letter." [71]

It would be a mistake to assume that the migrations of the scholarly profession was confined to the cosmopolitan cities. The Geniza has preserved a very considerable number of letters from the little towns of the Rīf, or the Egyptian countryside, which reveal that the teachers, cantors, and notaries there were also to a large extent foreigners, and that they were not exclusively from Palestine and Syria (although these formed the majority), but also from more distant countries and even from the lands of the Franks.[72] This fact is less surprising than might appear at first sight. It tallies well with the general economic and social importance of the smaller towns in that period, about which more is said in *Mediterranean Society,* Volume IV, chapter ix.

Naturally, the Cairo Geniza has preserved mainly information about foreigners seeking a livelihood in Egypt. There are also a few examples of the opposite situation. A young scholar, writing from Tyre, Lebanon, in October, 1190, informs his parents in Egypt that he had found a post in Jubayl (on the Lebanese coast, the ancient Byblos) and a wife in Tyre. He expresses his regret at being separated from his parents, but explains that he had to accept the position, as he had not found one at home.[73] The famous Saadya, we remember, also originated in Egypt and left it only after having become an accomplished scholar, as did his contemporary Isaac Israeli, one of the great doctors of the Middle Ages, who became court physician to various rulers of Tunisia.[74]

A further opportunity for far-flung travel was connected with the

others described so far. Merchants, craftsmen, and scholars alike would combine journeys undertaken in their personal interests with pilgrimages to holy places. The Muslim pilgrimage, of course, far outstripped in importance those of the other two religions. In the first place, pilgrimage was one of the main religious duties of a Muslim, whereas in Christianity and Judaism it was only a meritorious deed. Secondly, from its very inception, the pilgrimage to Mecca was connected with the great transcontinental trade and remained so throughout the Middle Ages. The standing wish for a Muslim pilgrim was: "May your *ḥajj* be accepted, your sin be forgiven and your merchandise not remain unsold." [75] The impressive development of the Jewish pilgrimage to the Holy City, as reflected in the Geniza, was at least partly influenced by the Muslim example, and perhaps the same holds true for the Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem, which, in the eleventh century, reached extraordinary dimensions.

The religious and commercial aspects of the pilgrimages are treated elsewhere in this study. Here, a few examples are quoted showing pilgrims as bearers of news, letters, and cultural goods. A man from Tripolitania, Libya, writes to a relative in Alexandria, in 1089, that he had not written for years inquiring about the addressee's health and family because he had been receiving reports about him constantly from the pilgrims—whether Jewish or Muslim, he does not say.[76] Yedaya of Narbonne, France, conveyed letters from Cairo to Jerusalem for business friends from Tunisia living in the capitals of Egypt and Palestine.[77] A pilgrim from the kingdom of Castilia, Spain, carried with him a compendium of Hebrew lexicography from Jerusalem to Wargla in the Algerian Sahara.[78] Likewise, "Jacob, the Leonese pilgrim," brought back with him to Spain a book by a Karaite author active in Jerusalem. It was soon used by a famous writer living in that country.[79]

To have made the pilgrimage conveyed an aura of distinction in the three religions. A letter of recommendation for a cantor states that "he had sojourned for many years in the Holy Land, in Baghdad and in Iraq [!] and had visited the tombs of the saints and the places where the prophets had wrought miracles." [80] Unlike Muslims, Jews did not normally bear the title "pilgrim" (Ar. *ḥājj*, Hebr. *ḥōgēg*) as permanent adjuncts to their names. Some women are referred to in the Geniza in this way, their sons being called "the son of the [female] pilgrim"; perhaps such women had made the pilgrimage unaccompanied by their husbands, or as widows, which was unusual, as women did not normally travel alone.[81]

As the passage about the widely traveled cantor indicates, it was not only the Holy City that attracted pilgrims. All over the Near East, and, of course, particularly in Palestine, there were places commemorative of biblical heroes or postbiblical saints, which were frequented by Jews, and the same was the case with Christians and Muslims.

Sometimes such places were the common goals for the followers of the three religions. "I travelled to Iraq and visited our lord Ezekiel [i.e., the alleged tomb of the prophet] and all the saints," writes a native of North Africa to his relatives in Old Cairo, and in the same letter he recommends to them a notable from Sijilmāsa, far back in Morocco, who was returning from Baghdad, certainly after having made the same pilgrimage.[82] A merchant out in India informs his family in Old Cairo that on his way home he would visit the holy places in Iraq and then again take to the sea for the travel home. He even asked his brother to delay his wedding for this pious purpose.[83] Egypt, which had witnessed the deeds of Joseph, Moses, and Aaron (some added Elijah and Ezra), naturally also had its sanctuaries and fixed dates for pilgrimages. As Egypt was a country of transit for people on their way from the West to Palestine, Iraq or India, the existence of these holy places did not cause the traveler to go out of his way, as did those in Palestine and Iraq.

Last, but not least, the people of the Mediterranean area moved about so much during the High Middle Ages because of the many troubles and misfortunes that befell them then. We have just read about the scholars roaming about in foreign countries in search of appropriate posts. It stands to reason that they would not have taken the trouble to seek appointment abroad if they had had opportunity to find any at home. The reasons for the economic decline of Tunisia during the eleventh century have been explained. It is, therefore, not surprising that a most prominent merchant writing from there early in that century to a business friend in Egypt should inquire of the latter whether he could not help him to emigrate. In another letter from the same time and country, the writer congratulates a countryman on settling in Egypt, "for," he adds, "the whole [Muslim] West is not worth a thing these days."[84] A man from strife-torn Syria complains (beginning of twelfth century) that people like him could no longer live in Damascus—a brother, two sisters, and a cousin of the writer, as we know from various sources, had already preceded him to Egypt.[85]

Nothing is more illustrative in this respect than the many lists of people who were in receipt of alms, in cash or in kind, from the Jewish community of Old Cairo. Of the many groups included in them, such as invalids, sick or old people, widows and orphans, by far the most numerous was that of foreigners from practically every corner of the Mediterranean world. The Europeans, the Rūm, are very conspicuous in them,[86] and in certain periods they were more numerous than all other foreigners taken together. Thus, a statement about the distribution of loaves of bread, dated October 30, 1107, enumerates under the heading "Al-Rūm" forty-seven persons, many of whom had one or more dependents.[87] A similar statement, written ten days later, enumerates forty-three persons (mostly the same names) under that heading, but adds, at the end, that thirteen other Rūm, whose names are not speci-

fied, also received loaves.[88] Finally, an undated list, written by the same hand and containing largely the same names in the sections devoted to the needy coming from Muslim countries, at the end bears the following remark: "*The Rūm are too numerous to be listed.*" In the sections specifying names, out of eighty-six households listed, twelve were those of immigrants from Palestine, while the newcomers from other countries, ranging from Spain and Sicily to Ḥijāz in North Arabia, appear singly or in small groups.[89]

It is perhaps noteworthy that the names of Yemenites (Jews from South Arabia) occur exclusively in the lists of contributors to public collections, never in those of receivers of alms. This means, of course, that they had come to Egypt not as refugees, but as merchants, craftsmen, or scholars.[90]

In addition to the great, all-comprising calamities and catastrophes, such as the devastation of Palestine and Syria in the centuries before and during the Crusades, or the upheavals wrought by the Hilāl and Sulaym, or by the Almohads in the Muslim West, which caused mass emigrations, there were countless personal reasons that induced or forced individuals to be on the move. When anything went wrong, one followed the maxim "The change of one's domicile brings good luck" and went abroad. The poor man was confident that in a foreign country he would find more consideration than at home. "I left our country many years ago, because I was poor and put my trust in God's mercy and help" (i.e., in public philanthropy), writes a Jerusalem pilgrim from the far Muslim West.[91] Even a blind singer would prefer begging en route to staying at home.[92] When a government official in Granada, Spain, fell into disgrace, his son preferred to leave the country, equipped with a huge letter of recommendation given to him by the local community.[93] This happened around 1050. Half a century earlier, Joseph Ibn Abitur, a great scholar and worthy poet, was at loggerheads with the chief religious authority of the Spanish Jews. In order to avoid complications, he went with his sons on the holy pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but like other famous pilgrims, for example, the great Muslim historian Ibn Khaldūn, remained in Egypt, where quite a number of his writings have found their way into the Geniza.[94] Two hundred years later, we find the Nagid Abraham Maimonides writing with his own hand instructions to pay three dirhems a week "to a worthy Spanish traveler," whom he calls in another note "a relative of the rabbi of Toledo."[95]

The various incentives for travel around the Mediterranean surveyed thus far, such as religious motives, sheer want, and other circumstances, often acted in combination. An outstanding example is the moving story of a scholarly Egyptian Jew who must have been a bohemian of sorts. "Amassing money," he writes to his son, "as you know is not one of my characteristics, and when I have some, I eat it up." From Fustat, where he left a son and three daughters, all, it

seems, married, he traveled with a second wife and a fourth daughter to Jerusalem, for, as he wrote, he wanted to bury his bones in the Holy City. He did not die, however, and in those days, the early 1060's, a scholar could not find a livelihood in Jerusalem. So, he moved on northward to Damascus and other places. Finally, he "despaired of the countries of the Muslims" and entered Byzantine territory. There, in eastern Asia Minor, he was overtaken by the great invasion of the Seljuk Turks, described above, p. 35. He fled westward and did not stop for long even in Constantinople, but settled in Salonika. "It is now twenty-six years that I left you," he writes to his son, "and during all this time I did not find rest in one place for more than thirty months." On these arduous travels his daughter perished, but another one was born to him and became a beautiful girl. Although Salonika was a center of Jewish learning, the old man, who meanwhile had lost his eyesight and also had become hard of hearing, proved his mettle in his disputations with the local scholars. According to his letter, which is written in an optimistic and almost humoristic vein, he was "loved and honored by every God-fearing and intelligent person." When his son wrote from Fustat, urging him to return to Egypt, he strongly refused, while his wife and daughter were eager to accept the invitation. It is not difficult to gauge the reason for this antagonism: the women remained strangers in the Greek city; the common bond of scholarship let the old man feel at home there.[96]

Family troubles were another, and perhaps the most common reason for long-distance travel. Indelicate as it may sound, it must be conceded that running away as far as possible from one's wife was practiced as vigorously by the people represented in the Geniza as by the husbands in the stories of the Arabian Nights. The Jewish marriage contract normally stipulated a relatively high sum to be paid to the divorcee, which made a divorce either impossible or, at least, highly unpalatable. Consequently, a poor man having marital trouble had little choice but to absent himself.[97] In a letter sent from Egypt to Seleucia (Silifke) in Byzantine Asia Minor we read that the addressee had been away from his wife and daughter for twenty-three years (he had been believed dead). His father-in-law speaks to him in terms, as if he had absented himself for not more than twenty-three weeks.[98] A scholar, writing from Palestine to his son-in-law, who had disappeared in Egypt, complains bitterly that the latter enjoyed himself with Egyptian food and drink—and plays (this word is written above the line)—while his wife and children were held as pawns by the Count (Raymond III) and Countess of Tiberias (around 1080).[99] Even worse was the case of a woman from Qayrawān who had been brought by her husband to Old Cairo and suddenly discovered that he intended to forsake her and to emigrate to another country (around 1040).[100]

As a rule, only people from the lower strata of the society, who had little to lose by emigration and who were inconspicuous, could dare to

leave their wives in such a way. For if a fugitive husband was found out, he was brought to court, wherever he happened to be. This is attested by many documents, mostly powers of attorney given by women to persons traveling to countries where their roaming husbands were supposed to be. Thus it seems that, whereas in the upper classes intermarriage between prominent houses in different countries contributed to the unity of the Mediterranean scene, in the lower classes it was broken marriages that fed international traffic.

## 3. FREEDOM OF COMMUNICATION

The shores of the Mediterranean witnessed a continuous coming and going throughout the High Middle Ages. How this was achieved, the technical, economic, and social aspects of travel and seafaring, are discussed in chapter iv. Here, it remains for us to scrutinize the historical implications and to determine the effect of political boundaries on the freedom of movement of either persons, goods, or ideas.

References to such limitations are conspicuously absent in the Geniza papers. Many hundreds of letters and documents speak of travels to, or in, foreign countries, but, with a few exceptions, they have nothing to say about obstacles put in the way of the traveler for political reasons. Naturally, there were wars and actions related to them, such as the imprisonment of the Genoese merchants in Egypt at a time of the great attacks of the Genoese fleets on the coasts of Palestine and Syria, described above, page 45. Literary sources tell us about savage acts of retaliation against the merchants of Amalfi in Old Cairo, who were suspected of having set fire to the new ships of the Fatimid navy in May, 996.[1] In Saladin's time, we read about three poor foreigners who lived in hiding, and, when denunciated as "enemies of the king," were thrown into prison where two of them perished. In the same period, in a letter sent from Alexandria to Aden, the writer expresses the apprehension that the *nāẓir*, or superintendent, of the port would not give him permission to sail, because he regarded him as suspicious for the mere reason that he had arrived on a Frankish boat.[2] Such occurrences were definitely exceptional. Traveling on Italian ships had become absolutely commonplace for Jews from Muslim countries in the twelfth century, and, as is well known, the Spanish Muslim geographer Ibn Jubayr traveled from Morocco to Egypt and from Palestine via Sicily to Spain on Christian ships at a time (1183–1185) when the tension between the two religions was at its height.[3]

Nowhere do we read in the Geniza records that visits by foreigners were limited in time or confined to certain localities, as was the case in Byzantium, at least in certain periods. Fatimid Egypt was flooded by merchants from Sunnite Tunisia at a time when there was open friction between the governments of the two countries; these visitors were

granted free access to the most remote places of both Lower and Upper Egypt, where they could inspect and buy the local products. Indeed, while reading the Geniza letters of this period, one forgets that political boundaries existed at all. To add just one example of extended travel to the many given above: In a letter of recommendation, written by the Gaon, or Head of the Academy, in Jerusalem, the highest Jewish religious authority at that time, we read: "The bearer of these lines is a man called . . . from the country of Khorāsān. He brought me a letter of recommendation from a merchant in Seville called. . . . He is now proceeding to Egypt."[4] Khorāsān, in far northeastern Iran, produced textiles, especially *ibrīsim* silk, which were exported to the West. At the time of this letter, we find a consignment of Khorāsānian silk on its way via Aleppo and Tyre to Egypt and a merchant from Qayrawān traveling to his native city together with some Iranian merchants to whom he owed the large sum of 300 dinars, to be paid to them after arrival.[5] Thus it is not surprising that a merchant from that distant country should have accompanied his merchandise as far as Spain. Because the pilgrimage to Jerusalem was eagerly observed by Spanish Jews, the Head of the Academy knew the more prominent Jewish notables of Seville personally, or at least had corresponded with them. Still, such far-flung travels by ordinary people suggest that the many frontiers that they had to cross on their way could not have constituted a serious impediment.

We also hear very little of embargoes on the export of goods and nothing about a ban on imports. Occasionally, such embargoes were imposed, for example, in Tunisia, on oil and oil products, its main agricultural export, perhaps in times of scarcity or of imminent wars, when stores had to be laid in.[6] Iron, the war material par excellence, so common a merchandise on the Indian Ocean, is all but absent from the Mediterranean Geniza papers. Once, when it is mentioned, the reference is made in Hebrew, which suggests that the trade in this commodity was not free.[7] But such cases are exceptional. Rather more common was the opposite situation, namely the prerogative of the local government to buy first. A man sending 20 millstones from Palestine to Egypt hoped to make a good profit, but was afraid that the millstones would be seized by the government.[8] Lead and wax, coming from the West, would be bought up by the authorities in Alexandria, and the ships were not allowed to unload before they had made their decision.[9] Precious textiles would also attract the attention of the luxury-loving courts, whether in Egypt or in Tunisia, and sometimes, the covetousness of a local ruler proved to be oppressive.[10] Such practices were not frequent, and, quite the contrary in certain periods, we find that the merchants were eager to sell, for example, their silk, to the government agencies.[11]

Money, too, enjoyed a remarkable degree of free circulation. Coinage was, of course, the prerogative of the rulers, and, in times of political

upheavals, such as the conquest of Egypt by the Fatimids, or the repudiation of the Shīʿite government of Egypt by Tunisia seventy years later, heavy monetary restrictions were imposed. In normal times, however, money was a commodity that could be traded everywhere. As is the case with any merchandise, some coins had a better market in certain places than in others, and, in addition, some currencies, such as the Fatimid, and later on, the Almoravid gold dinar as well, were international means of payment comparable to the U.S.A. dollar of our times. When an octogenarian from Āmul, the capital of Ṭabaristān south of the Caspian Sea, left his hometown in order to conclude his life where his father had found his last rest (presumably in Jerusalem), he took one hundred and fifty Maghreb dinars with him to Baghdad where he handed them over to a renowned banker for a draft on an equally famous banking house in Old Cairo.[12] It is not difficult to explain, how so much "western" money traveled eastward. Ṭabaristān upholstery held absolute sway over the western markets (cf. above p. 50). Still, the caliphs of Baghdad were the professed enemies of the Fatimids, who were the issuers of the dinars carried by that old man. This only shows that political boundaries were no obstacle for money, as long as it was good.

It should also be noted that foreigners were obviously free to acquire real estate wherever they wished. Thus we find that a merchant from Almeria, Spain, possessed a house in Fez, Morocco. We learn about this when his son, for reasons explained on page 62, preferred not to use it, but stayed with local friends.[13] It must have been a common thing for a merchant from Tunisia to own a house in Old Cairo.[14] We also hear of the case of a person having a little house in Palermo, Sicily, and another in Damsīs, Egypt, where his wife lived.[15] A prominent notable like Nahray b. Nissīm possessed houses in Qayrawān, Alexandria (about which we hear much), Old Cairo, and Jerusalem (also mentioned repeatedly), the last three, it seems, at one and the same time. It is most remarkable that even a *muʿāhid,* a Jew from a Christian country who had the status of a foreigner, could acquire real estate in Fustat, as is proved by a tenth-century document.[16]

All the evidence available from the Geniza records taken together, it seems admissible to characterize the Mediterranean area in the period under discussion as a *free-trade community.* To be sure, there were countless customs stations all over the place. But these were found by no means only at the frontiers, but at the gates of any sizable town. According to Muslim canonical law, non-Muslims were obliged to pay a double rate of customs duties. This law was certainly not enforced in Fatimid times, since nowhere in the Geniza records is any reference made to its existence in this period. Saladin tried to reenact that ancient discrimination, but was soon forced to abandon the idea. Some allusions to these changes in Muslim sources find their explanation in a Geniza report from Alexandria about an edict by Saladin, promulgated

by the governor of that city, to the effect that Jews and Christians, both local and foreign, "pay only one half of the customs," that is, were again made equal to Muslims in this respect.[17]

Sometimes, we hear of special customs dues for foreigners, for example, in Sicily, shortly before the termination of Muslim rule over that island, as well as in Morocco. The young man from Almeria, Spain, of whom we have read that he preferred to stay with friends instead of in the house belonging to his own family, did so in order to be able to declare the merchandise carried by him as destined for a local merchant. As we shall see (p. 344, below), cheating and evading the payment of customs is rare in the Geniza papers, presumably because customs rates were generally reasonable. The imposition of special dues for foreigners was obviously regarded as objectionable, and for Sicily, at least, we learn that it was soon rescinded.

It would be misleading to speak about passports in this period. Jews and Christians from Muslim countries, where they were compelled to pay a yearly poll tax, had to carry with them a certificate showing that they had fulfilled their duty. Otherwise, they would have had to pay a second time. But in this respect, too, there was no difference between a foreigner and a native person of the same status. No Jew or Christian in Egypt could travel from one place to another without carrying with him such a certificate.[18]

Foreigners coming from a non-Muslim country naturally had to pay for the protection granted them. From a Geniza document we learn that this special tax was incumbent even upon persons brought to Muslim territory against their own will, namely when captured by pirates. In such a case, which occurred in or around 1026, the tax amounted to 2.5 dinars per person, a substantial, but still reasonable amount.[19] This tax was essentially the same as the poll tax paid by the local "protected people," the Jews and the Christians. The protection given to foreigners, the Geniza informs us, was as efficient as any given to the local population: it worked well when one had influential friends who saw to it that it worked.

Another field in which the foreigner was seemingly discriminated against was the fate of his belongings in case he died abroad. This vast problem of the seizure of the estates of foreigners by local rulers was the subject of various international treaties and is echoed in the Geniza records in many different forms. This tribulation, too, was not specific to foreigners, but concerned in general the estates of persons who died without heirs or without their heirs being present or able to submit their claims. In the unruly France of the eleventh century, a local potentate would seize the property of a native old man after his son had been murdered, under the pretext that, in any case, he now would have no heir to succeed him.[20] At the same time, in the contemporary Fatimid empire, the salvaged goods of a drowned foreign merchant would be turned over by the authorities to the court of his religious

community in order to be transmitted to his legal heirs in a distant country.[21] Contrariwise, under the less liberal regime of the Ayyubids, a person whose family was not with him at the time of his demise had to face the dire prospect that his property would be confiscated—a case particularly frequent in Jerusalem where old people used to spend the end of their days in devotion, far away from their families.[22] When we find in our records that traders going abroad were often accompanied, followed, or preceded, by sons, brothers, nephews, or other relatives, in many cases the aim was not only assistance, but also a safeguard for one's estate in the event of death. Still, we never hear that the dread of confiscation of one's goods acted as a deterrent to travel overseas.

The facts presented so far in this and the preceding sections should by no means induce us to believe that the society speaking to us through the Geniza records was a crowd of cosmopolitans with no roots and no attachment to their country of provenance. Strange as it may appear after all the talk of travel, the opposite is true. We find the most outspoken testimonies of devotion to the writers' countries and native cities and to the people originating from them. After having lived for seventeen years in Egypt, the silversmith from Ceuta, Morocco, whose letter is translated in *Mediterranean People,* still describes himself as a foreigner and expects help only from his compatriots, although, at that time of the Almohad terrors, Morocco was Hell and Egypt, as the writer says, using a biblical phrase, "the land of life." [23] Nahray b. Nissīm, who passed more than fifty years of his life in Egypt always regarded himself as a Maghrebi and was expected by his compatriots to exert himself first and foremost on their behalf.[24] A devout Byzantine "mourner of Zion" writes from Jerusalem: "Perhaps God will some day bring me back to my home and 'the inheritance of my fathers.' " [25] The same biblical expression is used by another Jerusalem pilgrim with regard to his native Morocco: "May the Creator of the world presently let us meet together in joy, when I return under his guidance to my homeland and the inheritance of my fathers." [26] Similarly, Joseph Ibn Abitur, the Spanish scholar and poet, who was stranded in Egypt (cf. above p. 57), speaks longingly of Spain as "my homeland and my native country." [27]

This psychological attachment to one's home country was reflected in the legal situation. It took a long time until a person was naturalized in his new domicile. The scholars from Palestine, who served in the little towns of Egypt as teachers, cantors, and notaries, were obliged to appear every year in Cairo in order to pay their poll tax to the Syro-Palestinian poll-tax office. We hear about this in particular under al-Malik al-Kāmil (1218–1238), one of the successors of Saladin, at a time when Egypt and Syria were united, at least theoretically, in one state. "Our schoolteacher cannot pay his tax here in Minyat Ziftā," says a letter, addressed to the Nagid Abraham Maimonides, "for he is a Palestinian. When the time of the payment arrived, he had to leave

for Cairo."[28] Even more telling is the case of the judge Elijah b. Zachariah, concerning whom and his ramified family a very large number of records has been preserved. He originated from Palestine, but had been living for such a long time in Alexandria that he was regularly called "the Alexandrian." Later on he became judge in Old Cairo, where he must have been very popular, for he is often styled "*the* judge of the Jews," although other judges are known to us as having held office together with him. Yet even his son, a cantor and teacher in Old Cairo, still had to register at the poll-tax office for Palestinians.[29] Still more impressive is the following detail from a letter to Elijah by another son of his, an army doctor. After having informed him of great changes that had taken place in both Muslim and Jewish Alexandria, he implies that his father had good prospects of becoming the Jewish chief justice of Alexandria, although a certain prominent man (either the Muslim governor or a Jewish notable) does not like Palestinians—and this after so many years of distinguished service in the two main cities of Egypt![30] This important subject of local patriotism versus cosmopolitanism is discussed more fully in the concluding chapter of this study (Vol. IV, chap. x).

Fortunately, local patriotism was no impediment to the free circulation of ideas and books. I was very much impressed, when, in a list of books left by a deputy judge in a small town in Lower Egypt, I found mention of a bound volume of responsa by a Spanish Jewish scholar who had died only a few years before that judge, and, as far as is known, had never traveled to the East.[31] In Mayence, the ancient Roman town on the banks of the Rhine, Germany, it was possible, in the tenth century, to find not only all the more important spices of India and the Far East (as reported by the Spanish-Jewish traveler mentioned p. 27, above), but also a man able to translate a book of instructions for Bible cantillation from Arabic into Hebrew—and this fact is by no means stated as something extraordinary.[32] The translator, or his father, had come from Italy, where Greek, Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew were at that time used side by side. It is therefore not surprising that the classical thesaurus of postbiblical Hebrew (which contains many elements derived from, or akin to, the three other languages) should have been written in Rome. It is remarkable that not many years after that great dictionary was written, we find a merchant from Old Cairo, who happened to be in Tlemçen, Algeria, asking his business correspondent in Almeria, Spain, to procure a copy for him. The latter found one in Ceuta, Morocco, which was frequented in those days by Italian ships.[33]

It is natural that ideological clashes should be accentuated, or even created, by the contrast of the state of civilization or the frame of mind prevailing in different countries. Maimonides' philosophical chef d'oeuvre, written in Egypt, was banned and burned by the Jews of France, most of whom had little use for the spirituality of Greek

philosophy. To the contrary, French rabbis, coming out to the Muslim East, although much sought after because of their great Jewish learning, sometimes became the target of ridicule and even insult because of their plainly literal approach to the Bible and their lack of refinement in things theological.[34] The great Persian Muslim theologian al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) was hailed in the East as the renewer of Islam, but in Almoravid Morocco and Spain his books were condemned and publicly burned. This condemnation, although deeply rooted in the mentality and traditions of the local Muslim scholars, did not last very long, for the Almohad turnabout established al-Ghazālī's authority in the West as well. In any case, the very facts that Maimonides' books were burned in France and those of al-Ghazālī in Spain, demonstrate how far and unimpededly books traveled in those times and how influential they became even in distant countries. No one, except fools, takes the trouble to burn irrelevant books.

The most eloquent testimony to the freedom of movement in the Mediterranean area during the High Middle Ages was the religious and public life of the religious community represented in the Geniza papers. Regular contributions were made by the Jewish congregations all over the Fatimid empire for the benefit of the two great Jewish seats of learning in Baghdad. Likewise, collections were held in the Jewish communities of the Sunni West, in Spain and North Africa, for the academy in Jerusalem, a town under Fatimid rule. Similarly, donations were sent to Baghdad and Jerusalem from Christian countries, for example, from Lucca in northern Italy, from Narbonne and Montpellier in France and Mayence in Germany. All these communities submitted their questions concerning matters of faith, rite, or civil law to the heads of those schools, and countless replies, often given after joint deliberations of all the scholars present, the responsa, have been preserved. As a result of all this, the Jewish church, despite the enormous dispersion of its members, has remained or become amazingly uniform in its basic liturgy, in its religious practice, and in whatever secular legislation it was permitted to apply. It is perhaps characteristic of the age that the Karaite heresy also was able to spread from its countries of origin, Iraq and Persia, to Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, to Byzantium, where it became very influential, as well as to the Muslim West, including even Christian Spain. It seems that Wargla, deep south in the Algerian Sahara, which was a great center of the Muslim sect of the Ibāḍites, was also a stronghold of Karaism.[35]

There is even more to this. The Geniza records abundantly prove that the higher officials of the Jewish communities, such as judges, community leaders, heads of local schools, and the like, were appointed, or approved in their appointment, by the religious authorities in Jerusalem or Baghdad, or both, although, in most cases, more than one frontier had to be crossed to obtain such an appointment or approval. This interplay between local and ecumenical public author-

ity is discussed in *Mediterranean Society,* Volume II, chapter v. Suffice it to say here that, thus far, not a single instance has been found in our papers where the governments of the countries concerned interfered in this procedure, which was not merely a formality, but had a tangible influence on the life of their Jewish subjects. The Christian communities in Islamic countries were in a similar situation, although their generally larger size, their organization in rivaling churches, and their natural connection with the Christian powers of Europe entailed modifications.

To sum up: during the High Middle Ages men, goods, money, and books used to travel far and almost without restrictions throughout the Mediterranean area. In many respects, the area resembled a free-trade community. The treatment of foreigners, as a rule, was remarkably liberal. The close connection among all parts of the Jewish diaspora, expressed in contributions to, and spiritual and organizational dependence upon, ecumenical religious authorities in faraway countries was not regarded by the governments of the various states concerned as an infringement on their sovereignty.

How is all this to be explained? To a certain extent, by the fact that the machinery of the state was relatively loose in those days, that is, the technique of making life unbearable was not yet as perfected as it is in our own days. One should not however, strain this point too much. There is plenty of evidence in the Geniza records as well as in Arabic sources that the governments kept a vigilant eye on foreigners and also that they often had opportunity to occupy themselves with the inner affairs of the non-Muslim communities. Officially appointed spies and the secret police saw to it that visitors from foreign countries did not evade their customs duties and did not engage in any activity detrimental to the state. Quarrels between individuals and communal strife often invoked the intervention of the governments or their local officials. Thus, it was not so much the looseness of the machinery of the state as positive factors that contributed to the amazing degree of the freedom of movement and to the comparatively close unity of the Mediterranean world.

At the root of all this was the concept that law was personal and not territorial. An individual was judged according to the law of his religious community, or even religious "school" or sect, rather than that of the territory in which he happened to be. Perhaps it would be even more exact to say that, with the exception of some local statutes, promulgated and abrogated from time to time, the states as such did not possess any law. These were the preserves of the religions and their various subdivisions. For Jews in Spain or France to seek "High Court decisions" in Jerusalem or Baghdad, or, later on, with Maimonides and his successor in Cairo, was the normal and natural thing to do. It would hardly occur to an American judge of our own days to try to make a livelihood by exercising his profession while traveling around

the globe. For nowhere outside the United States, nay outside his own state in the U.S., would he be able to obtain an appointment. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, however, the great Muslim traveler of the fourteenth century, made his way from Morocco to China and back, while dispensing Mālikī law (he also engaged in business, as befitted a judge in those days). This is a brand of Muslim law which was widely accepted in North Africa, but comparatively rare elsewhere, and therefore a scholar of the caliber of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa was welcomed by the scattered Mālikī communities and engaged by them as judge.

Similarly, we have seen that the Egyptian Jewry often procured its judges and other community officials from foreign and even very distant countries almost during the whole of the classical Geniza period. The great influx of Jewish scholars from France, as from 1200, is particularly significant, for with them a threefold difficulty existed: they were often not fluent in Arabic, and, as judges, had to take recourse to interpreters, a procedure not permitted by Jewish law; secondly, in France the Jews enjoyed less legal autonomy than in Egypt, with the consequence that these scholars, with all their learnedness, had little experience with the practical application of their knowledge, as far as civil law was concerned; and finally, there was the discrepancy in theological conceptions described above. No wonder that after the death of Anatoli of Marseilles, judge in Alexandria (see p. 53, above), a dissident party in that town produced an ancient statute to the effect that no French or Byzantine Jew should be appointed as judge in that town. It turned out, however, that the statute invoked did not disqualify foreigners as such, but only those who were not fluent in the language of the country. As a matter of fact, another scholar from France, fluent in Arabic, was appointed as Anatoli's successor.[36] Sometimes, it was even advantageous for the foreigner not to know the local vernacular. Thus, one cantor writes to another, while most warmly recommending to him his revered teacher, a Jewish scholar from France: "Arrange for him to get an appointment as a cantor; since he does not know the language of this country, he can never become dangerous to you as a competitor."[37]

The mounting arrivals of Jews from France who either came to stay in Egypt or expected to be equipped there with the means for proceeding to the Holy Land, became a heavy burden on the Egyptian communities. In a letter from Alexandria, dated May 15, 1235, we read: "A boat has arrived from Marseilles after a voyage of 25 days. Mūsā, the parchment-maker, who traveled in it—you know him—told us that a huge crowd of our coreligionists prepare themselves to come—may God guard us from the troubles they cause! This is an exact information about which there is no doubt."[38] In another letter from Alexandria, which is highly interesting because of adventures in Tarsus (then the capital of Little Armenia) reported in it, the writer asks his correspondent to take care of a refugee, scion of a most noble family from

Sicily, since the Alexandrian community was fully occupied with providing help for a large group of coreligionists from France.[39] There are many more references in the Geniza to this population movement. But nowhere has a hint been found that the Egyptian government impeded or discouraged this inflow of people from a country whose rulers, as the events of 1219 and 1249 showed, were intent on the conquest of Egypt itself.

Foreigners were admitted even to government service. I do not refer here to the practice of the Fatimids and other rulers of acquiring able slaves from distant countries and promoting them to high and highest positions of confidence, but to the employment of members of the free civil population in the *khidma,* or government service. A document from spring, 1140, tells about a Jew from Sicily (which by then had been under Christian domination for two generations) who was appointed to a government office in Cairo, but incurred an unforeseen difficulty. He had married a woman in Damascus and the latter refused to follow him to his new domicile, while the government regulations required that the officials should live with their families in the city in which they were employed.[40]

In his delightful *Byzantine Civilization,* Steven Runciman tells how the patriarch of Alexandria (in Fatimid Egypt) spent several weeks with the Byzantine emperor Basil II in 1016, acting as mediator between the emperor and the patriarch of Constantinople.[41] This reminds the student of the Geniza of the French scholar Meir b. Baruch, who, around 1220, was influential enough with the Jews of Old Cairo to induce them to recognize as "exilarch" a man from a Damascene family claiming descent from the House of David. It is characteristic that, despite this influential position, Meir's knowledge of the language of the country was not sufficient to enable him to read Maimonides' philosophical work in the Arabic original. When he read it in a Hebrew translation, he was favorably impressed, but asked, that his own students, who had accompanied him and his brother from France, should not be shown the book, as they were not prepared for such mental treats.[42] Approximately at the same time (Jan., 1207), the support of a local judge in Wāsiṭ, Iraq, by a Frankish Jew was sufficient to make it difficult for the Gaon of Baghdad to depose him.[43]

It is hardly necessary to quote Geniza texts to prove that the same law was applied to the members of one religious community throughout the Mediterranean area, irrespective of the country in which they happened to live. Examples appear in this book in many different contexts. A few specific instances may illustrate the situation. A series of transactions, which had taken place in Qayrawān, al-Mahdiyya, Sfax (Tunisia), and Palermo, involving merchants called Barqī (from Barqa in Libya), Ṭarābulusī (Tripoli), and Andalusī (Spain) formed the object of a settlement before the rabbinical court in Old Cairo in spring, 1040, simply because some of the litigants happened to be

present in that city.[44] A power of attorney, made out in Denia, Spain, was "validated" in al-Mahdiyya, revalidated in Alexandria, and, finally accepted as a legally valid instrument in the capital of Egypt. This cumbersome procedure was necessary because the original witnesses from Spain had traveled only as far as Tunisia, while one of the witnesses of al-Mahdiyya was available in Alexandria, where the signature of the Jewish judge of al-Mahdiyya was also known.[45] Another incident connecting Spain and Egypt is particularly telling. A person who had been excommunicated by the Jewish authorities in four cities of Spain, Granada, Lucena, Cordova, and Seville, tried what other people had done in similar circumstances: he vanished and traveled to Egypt. There, however, he was met by other people from Spain who demanded from the Jewish judge of Alexandria to pronounce on him the ban there. The judge hesitated, for he was informed that the man would defect to Islam if he received the same treatment in Egypt he had experienced in his home country. Under these circumstances his adversaries approached the Nagid, or Head of the Jewish community in the Fatimid empire, with the request to pronounce the ban against that man and to instruct the judge in Alexandria to do the same. The Geniza letter telling this story was sent by special messenger from Alexandria to Cairo, urging the addressees (also foes from Spain of the excommunicated man) to deliver to the Nagid all the documents connected with the case and to see to it that action was taken without delay.[46]

The last two incidents reveal that the contacts between the westernmost and the eastern corners of the Mediterranean cannot have been too close after all. The very fact that people tried to evade their obligations toward their families, or creditors, or communities by fleeing to another country proves the precariousness of communications. Despite the existence of a direct shipping line between Spain and Egypt, going east for a prolonged period meant a severe loosening or even severing of the ties with the people back home. A young merchant from Badajoz in southwestern Spain (near the Portuguese border) who was active in Jerusalem, as well as in Tyre, Aleppo, and other cities of Syria, writes to a business friend in Fustat, enclosing a letter to his family: "Perhaps one of the merchants from Toledo or one of the pilgrims returning to Madrid is prepared to convey the letter, for my brother and my father used to commute to Madrid. Or, there may be with you even a letter to me from my family, *if they believe that I am still alive.*" Thus writes a man who was an eager letter writer (we possess four, written during a short period, and others are referred to in these, including one confirming that he had heard once from his family).[47] In view of such sparseness of communication, the legal autonomy and unity of the various religious communities is the more remarkable.

The relative independence of the law (which was religious) of the state was paralleled by, and had partly its origin in, the freedom of

economy from state interference. The law of Islam, as that of Judaism, was mainly the creation of scholars of the middle class who were economically independent and, as a rule, not in the service of any government. The eighth and ninth centuries had witnessed this rise of a large and powerful merchant class all over the Middle East. During the tenth through the twelfth centuries, this class was the main bearer of Muslim civilization, including its Jewish and (Oriental) Christian enclaves. At the same time, the Italian and other Mediterranean merchants on the European shores emerged into the full light of history. However, while in Europe the merchant class obtained political power, expressed either in the local autonomy of free cities, or in the creation of city states, no such developments took place in the Muslim world. This contrast, which accounts so much for the difference between progressing Europe and an East lagging behind, was not yet felt very tangibly during the period considered here. At that time, a vigorous merchant class was active on both sides of the Mediterranean and created an atmosphere of unity despite the constant wars and political upheavals, and, owing to the relatively great freedom of the economy from state interference, people were less involved, when their rulers were at loggerheads with each other. This state of affairs was recognized by a keen contemporary observer, the Spanish traveler Ibn Jubayr. After having described, how, at the time of heavy fighting between Muslims and Christians, Muslim caravans passed safely through Crusaders' territory or moved to seaports held by Christians, he concludes:

"Likewise, in Muslim territory, none of the Christian merchants is forbidden entrance or is molested. The Christians impose a tax on the Muslims in their land, which gives them utmost security, while the Christian merchants also pay [customs] for their goods in the land of the Muslims. Reciprocity prevails and equal treatment in all respects. The warriors are engaged in their wars, while the people are at ease."[48]

## 4. THE GENIZA PEOPLE AS REPRESENTATIVE OF MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETY

It would be hazardous to use letters and documents left by European Jews of the Late Middle Ages for an overall picture of the society to which they belonged. For that was a time of intolerance when they led a life of seclusion, separated and almost sealed off from their environment. Not so with regard to the Mediterranean society of the period with which we are concerned here. Despite the high degree of legal and civic autonomy enjoyed by them at that time, and despite their status as semiforeigners, which they shared with the Christians in the realm of Islam and which was even more accentuated in Europe, in this

period they mingled freely with their neighbors and, therefore, cannot have been very much different from them. For, as the Arab proverb has it, "people are more akin to their contemporaries than they are to their own forefathers."[1] It stands to reason that a twelfth-century Jewish doctor, who worked in a government hospital in Cairo or Aleppo, was in most respects representative of the medical profession of his time in general, while a Jewish glassmaker, or silk-weaver, or metal founder would use the same techniques and occupy approximately the same social position as his Christian or Muslim fellow workers. Mutual help, as expressed in small, but not too small, loans, is attested in the Geniza as prevailing between members of different faiths but of the same or similar professions.[2]

It is instructive to compare a strictly isolated Jewish community, such as the Jews of Yemen in southern Arabia had been up to their mass exodus in 1949–1950, with that known to us through the Geniza from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The Yemenite Jews lived in entirely secluded quarters or villages.[3] The Geniza records, too, make occasional mention of quarters predominantly inhabited by Jews, or even called "the Jewish quarter." But these were not ghettos. Everywhere, whether in Old Cairo or in Qayrawān, in Damascus or in Jerusalem, or in Egyptian provincial capitals, we would find in the deeds preserved that Jewish houses, even in so-called Jewish quarters, happened to border on those owned by Muslims or Christians, or both. Even more so: Gentiles used to rent apartments and rooms belonging to the Jewish community chest and situated in the neighborhood of synagogues.[4]

The domestic architecture of the Jewish town house in Yemen was entirely different from that of the Muslims. The Jewish house was of the ancient Mediterranean type, with an inner court in the second floor, and it hardly ever had more than two and a half floors. The Muslim house imitated the local southern Arabian multistory fortress and often actually served as such. Each community built according to its own traditions and its social and economic exigencies.[5] We never hear about such differences in the Geniza, nor could they have existed, since houses built by Muslims and Christians often were acquired by Jews. This explains also why special women's quarters, *ḥaramiyya,* required by Muslim, but not by Jewish, social habits, are sometimes mentioned in documents referring to houses possessed by Jews.[6] In nineteenth-century Baghdad, Christian and particular Jewish houses were different from Muslim by the absence of this dichotomy.[7]

The clothing of the Yemenite Jew was distinct from that of his neighbors in every single detail. In the Fatimid empire, it seems, not even the canonical rules for the wearing of distinctive badges by non-Muslims were regularly observed. The fantastic ordinances in this respect by the caliph al-Ḥākim were soon forgotten; in any case, they have left no trace in the Geniza. A renewal of these discriminatory laws

is reported in a lengthy document from the year 1121, but from Baghdad, not from Cairo.[8] Abundant evidence shows that both Jewish males and females indulged in the most gorgeous fabrics and colors, the like of which would please, and actually be offered to, Muslim governors or sultans.

When a delegation of Arabian Jews visited the Umayyad caliph Muʿāwiya (661–680 A.D.), his first question was whether they still knew how to prepare the delightful *harīs* dish which the caliph remembered to have enjoyed while he himself was still in Arabia.[9] The answer was to the affirmative (some of them still have it as a Sabbath dish and call it by the same name as 1,300 years back). So far, nothing about a special Jewish kitchen has come to light from the Geniza, although the prohibition of cooking fresh food on Saturday must have led to the creation of some specialities. On the other hand, the Jews were rather prominent in the general food industry (see pp. 100 ff., below). Needless to say, the Jews used the same money, the same general goods, and the same means of locomotion as other people.

Unlike later medieval Europe, where murderously discriminative economic restrictions confined the Jews to a few unproductive occupations, in the world reflected in the Geniza, we find them in practically all arts and crafts, including agriculture. Naturally, they were more prominent in some than in others. The attachment of particular ethnic or religious groups to certain occupations has been common in the Middle East down to our own times and is not unfamiliar to the contemporary scene in the United States. It is, however, important to note that both the Geniza and Muslim literary sources show us that Gentiles also engaged in all the ways of making a livelihood which were adopted by Jews. In commerce, the Jews were prominent in textiles, dyeing, and pharmaceutical products, as well as in metals. But they traded in many other commodities as well. The methods of business, too, cannot have been peculiar to a particular religious group, for commerce was normally interfaith and, to a large extent, international. In certain cases, as with regard to the most important institution of partnership, we hear expressly that its Muslim, and not Jewish, legal form was mostly applied even when the contracts were made before a Jewish court. Partnerships between Muslims and Jews, both industrial and commercial, were nothing exceptional. Even the doctors of law, whose subject matter was essentially denominational, worked closely together, for cases often went back and forth from a Muslim to a Jewish court or vice versa. Sometimes, such professional contacts developed into personal friendships.

Jews did not serve in the army, but neither did the Muslims and Christians belonging to the sedentary local population. The Fatimid army consisted of Berbers, Turks, Negroes, and Bedouin levies; the Ayyubids, who were Kurds themselves, maintained a predominantly Kurdish and Turkoman officers corps with mercenaries drawn from

many different ethnic groups.[10] We find Jewish physicians attached to the Egyptian army and navy. When we hear about Jewish army purveyors less than we would expect, the cause might be that the various detachments provided themselves largely from the fiefs assigned to them. As to government service, the share of the Jews was certainly higher than their percentage of the total population warranted. The whole administration and economy of the country were based on tax-farming, an activity in which the Jews, although to a lesser degree than the Christians, were prominent. Entrepreneurs, even with small capital (and often in partnership), paid the government a fixed sum for the revenue expected from the taxes on agriculture, industry, or business, or from a customs house or toll station, and the surplus of the money actually collected represented their profit. This activity brought Christians and Jews into contact with all layers of the population in practically every corner of the country. The Geniza seems even to reveal the curious fact that the strictly orthodox Ayyubids employed Jews to a larger extent than did the "liberal" sectarian Fatimids. In any event, Jews had opportunity to contact both the lower and the higher echelons of the government apparatus just as the rest of the population did.

On the other hand, Jewish community life, it seems, differed markedly from that of the Muslim majority. The generally small Jewish communities, which provided almost all their social services themselves, were able to preserve more easily the ancient forms of intensive public life than the shapeless masses of Muslims, who had little opportunity for self-government. Whatever the origin of the Jewish communal organization might have been, whether it originated in the ancient Israelite primitive democracy, which had much in common with pre-Islamic Arabian life, or whether it was created through the special needs of the synagogue, or whether it was formed or transformed by the influence of the Hellenistic and Roman system of semiautonomous local corporations, the picture emanating from the Geniza records so far has nothing comparable among the Muslims. This impression, however, may change in the light of future research in the development of Islamic urbanism.[11]

The Jewish family, with its specific traditions and institutions, certainly was distinctive in more than one respect. In many others, the Geniza portrays an establishment the like of which used to be found in many corners of the Mediterranean world: an extended family of strong cohesiveness, great reverence for the senior members, prominence in the house of the old lady who presides over a bevy of daughters, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren, tender care of brothers for sisters and vice versa, and in general a stronger emphasis on the ties of blood than on those created by marriage. When we find that the Geniza society was practically monogamous, although ancient Jewish (like Muslim) law permitted polygamy, this practice was more charac-

teristic of a progressive middle class than of a specific religious community. It is not excluded that the same practice prevailed at that time in the corresponding layers of Muslim society. We shall get clarity in this point only if and when we shall have documents dealing with Muslims from this period similar in character and number to those provided to us by the Geniza.

Even more delicate is the question, how far the spirituality and psychology of the Geniza people were specifically Jewish and to what extent they could be taken as characteristic for the time and area in general. Finally, there remains the still far wider and more intricate problem, whether the various groups and individuals discernible in our records were representative of their countries of origin or domicile, of the world of Muslim civilization, or of Mediterranean society as a whole. In the concluding chapter of this work, some clues for answers to this question will be provided.[12]

CHAPTER II

# The Working People

## 1. THE SOCIAL CLASSES

The medieval society of northwestern Europe was predominantly agricultural and formed an imposing pyramid of highly differentiated and tightly closed ranks and classes: the kings and the great vassals; the higher and lower nobility; the higher and lower clerical orders; burghers and craftsmen, both organized in guilds of merchants or artisans; and, finally, the great mass of serfs, who worked the feudal manors.

The Mediterranean Islamic society of the High Middle Ages was essentially urban. Serving kings, either in the administration or in the army, was a profession that was adopted or imposed, rather than a rank that conferred a special and permanent status. The divines within the orbit of Islamic civilization, irrespective of their denomination, were part and parcel of the middle class and were often engaged in economic activities. When the Muslim lawyers wanted to explain the nature of social inequality that invalidated a marriage between unequal mates, they adduced examples from only two social layers: upper-class businessmen (such as merchants trading in spices, textiles, or jewelry) or bankers, and lower-class manual laborers (such as weavers, bloodletters, tanners, or cobblers).[1] The government servants and the religious scholars did not form a well-defined social class, while the peasants did not belong to the society altogether. A marriage between a townsman and a peasant woman—let alone the opposite case—was not considered feasible. Fellahs and Bedouins alike were beyond the pale of civilization. They were lumped together as such under the term *badw* (Bedouins, or "outsiders") by the greatest observer of Muslim medieval society, Ibn Khaldūn, although he, who viewed world history as a struggle for power between the wild peoples of the desert and the sedentary population, had every reason to include the peasants among the "insiders." Nothing is more indicative of the urban character of the civilization studied by him than his subsuming the fellahs under badw.[2]

This does not mean that this society was rootless and cut off from

the soil. Townspeople at that time were far less removed from the land than our own urban population normally is today. As the Geniza records indicate, not only the rich, but even people of modest means often possessed farming land and administered it personally. Many lived in little towns in the vicinity of their fields. Industries such as the production of oil, cheese, wine, and wax, were situated in the districts of olive growing, sheep breeding, viniculture, and bee keeping, respectively, and similarly, the great industrial crops such as flax, silk, and wool often were worked on the spot into raw material or even into finished products. Thus, the medieval townsman was, as a rule, never far away from nature and constantly involved in the primary processes of production. It is his voice, however, and only rarely that of the peasant who does the rough work, which we perceive in the Geniza records, or, for that matter, in any records that have come down to us from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries.

The urban society consisted of many different layers. The gross division into an affluent bourgeoisie and the common people mostly doing manual work does not do justice to the many grades and shades in the texture of the society, which we are able to observe in the Geniza records. The tone of a letter, often even the formulation of a document, immediately indicates to which classes the persons concerned belonged and by how many rungs of the social ladder they were separated (when they were not members of the same group). Still, this differentiation, marked as it was, had very little in common with the watertight compartments dividing the contemporaneous world of feudalism, but was more akin to that prevailing in our own modern society, where the division into classes is a matter of fact and etiquette, not of laws and institutions.

It is also correct to say that the people mirrored in the Geniza records were definitely class conscious. Social inequality was the natural thing to them, or, as they would put it, ordained by God. Its evils were mitigated by the common service of God, by joint action for the welfare of the community, by discreet help to needy members of one's own class and by boastful donations made during public appeals for the benefit of others. Open conflict between classes was not unknown in the Geniza world. It is in the nature of *Klassenkampf* for it to be most conspicuous in societies that have no institutionalized classes or where the castes begin to lose their rigidity.

At the top of the society was *al-ṭabaqa al-ʿaliyya,* the "uppermost story," or upper class.[3] To it belonged high government officials and agents, great doctors (often acting as parttime or fulltime court physicians), chief judges, and leading businessmen, especially if they were learned enough to act also as community leaders. These were "the notables connected with the government and well known to it."[4] Such a person was normally given the Hebrew title *sār,* "prince," rendered

in this book as "notable." It was a small group, where everyone knew his peer. Thus, we read in a letter, sent in 1130 by a Jewish notable from Granada, Spain, to a relative returning from Egypt who had just arrived in a Spanish port: "How did you find the upper class, small and big [i.e., young and old, or, less or more important]—may God keep the honored position of all of you." [5] In a less formal sense the word is used in a document from the Egyptian town of Sunbāṭ, dated September 27, 1090, where it designates the people of higher station in general.[6] The Geniza has preserved less material about the private life of the members of this class than of that of the others, presumably because most of them lived in Cairo, the residence of the caliph, and not in Fustat (where the Geniza chamber was found) and probably also because most of their correspondence was conducted in Arabic and not in Hebrew characters.

It would be fallacious to assume about the main body of the Geniza society that manual work as such was the chief characteristic of its lower strata. In reality the situation was far more complicated. It is true that the Hellenic contempt for anyone who worked with his hands had infected subsequent Mediterranean civilizations, including later Judaism and Islam. But the participation of the class of craftsmen in the development of these two religions was far too pronounced to leave that Greek prejudice unchallenged. Thus, in Judaism, along with the idea that manual work was degrading, we find the opposite conception, namely that toiling with one's hands assures bliss in this world and in the world to come. Exactly the same antagonism is to be met within the teachings of Islam. Correspondingly, the Geniza reveals that while the lowest ranks of society were formed by certain manual occupations, such as dyeing, we find people of the same crafts or of crafts known from other sources as despised, such as weaving, to be members of the middle middle, and sometimes even of the upper middle class. At least, as far as Jewish society is concerned, occupation alone did not determine one's social position.

What, then, were the factors that assigned man his place in society? First of all, his origin, his family. When he was of "the good people," "the noble families," "the illustrious houses," he would not lose face, even if personal misfortune deprived him of the material well-being normally enjoyed by respectable families. Thus, in a more indirect way, wealth played a decisive role in the formation of the various ranks of society.[7] Religiosity and learnedness—these two qualities were interconnected in medieval Judaism, as in Islam—were other decisive factors. At first sight, this appears strange to the modern observer. We have to remember, however, that religious practice and theory enjoyed a position in medieval life comparable to adherence to communism in contemporary Russia or China. To be a fervent believer in, and gifted expounder of, the ruling creed was a great title of honor and an

indispensable qualification for public leadership. Besides its wealth, it was the number of pious and scholarly members adorning it, which determined the prestige of a family.

Integrity and sound business practices were other factors enhancing the social status of a family. Naturally, these are qualities held in esteem everywhere. They were particularly valued by a cosmopolitan society constantly on the move and facing many risks and incertitude. The warm words addressed to the three senior Tustarī brothers of Fustat by their correspondents in Qayrawān, translated in *Mediterranean People*, are characteristic in this respect.[8]

Last, but not least—or should we say, first—liberal spending, coupled with the readiness to exert oneself for the public welfare or for people seeking help, determined the social prestige of a person and of his clan. Generations after a man had died, his generosity toward the scholars and the needy still would be publicly eulogized during memorial services.[9] All the year round, appeals were made and contributions solicited, and, as stated above, page 12, lists enumerating the contributors and sums donated by them have been preserved. Sometimes such lists are indicative of the economic stratification of the Geniza society. Thus the large fragment preserved in the Taylor-Schechter Collection, Cambridge, Box K 6, f. 149, represents the second and last leaves of such a list, which had been folded to form a booklet. The collection lasted for fourteen days, obviously because there was an emergency requiring a great expenditure, and community leaders had to go in person from one store or workshop to another to ask for contributions. Details for a part of the first day and for the entire second, thirteenth, and fourteenth are preserved. Clearly, some days were devoted to the richer and others to the poorer sections of the population. Thus, on the thirteenth day, almost all the contributions amounted to five or more gold pieces, while most of those on the second were between one and one and a half or less. Persons engaged in manual work, such as dyeing, glassmaking, or the manufacture of beads or women's scarves, paid from one-half to one gold piece; some, whose profession is not indicated, paid one-quarter (or its equivalent, ten silver pieces); storekeepers, such as druggists, contributed an average of one-and-a-half, while merchants and physicians gave sums ranging from three or four to five, seven-and-a-half, and ten dinars, with one person, bearing the Hebrew title "the generous," giving twenty (together with his uncle and his brothers). It is significant that one physician paid only one dinar, the same as various dyers, and one worker in silk contributed one-and-a-half, the sum given by storekeepers, but also by one doctor.[10]

It is characteristic for the position of slaves or freedmen that "the boy" of a community leader paid five dinars, the average assessment of the upper middle class. The servants of the great often acted as chief stewards and business agents of their masters and thus occupied *de facto* a position similar to that of wealthy merchants.[11]

We see, then, that the Geniza speaks of five different social levels: the upper class; the bourgeoisie of businessmen and professionals, which itself was clearly divided into two layers, the upper middle and lower middle, to the lower of which also belonged the master artisans; the mass of urban craftsmen and laborers; and, finally, the peasants. The lower middle class were called "beggars." Thus, a Tunisian merchant writes to a young friend in Egypt around 1050: "Buy four bales of flax, but do not buy from the Ṭansāwī (family name derived from that of an Egyptian village), for you have not enough strength to deal with these great houses, better pick out personally the best you can get from the beggars (the smaller merchants)." Similarly, a letter around 1200, describing the catastrophic consequences of a heavy imposition by the government, concludes its complaint by saying: "The well-to-do are perishing together with the beggars," and another, written about a hundred and twenty years earlier, refers to the three lower grades of the society as follows: "These dinars are not good even for beggars and for craftsmen, only peasants would use them." The same expression is applied to a highly respected merchant with little means, in a letter from the beginning of the twelfth century.[12]

It remains for us to inquire whether these socioeconomic classes were tightly closed castes, a man being restricted to his station, or whether there existed opportunities for climbing the social ladder. The Geniza contains ample material on these questions, which conveys the impression that the society mirrored in it was in this respect in a position halfway between the rigid system of feudalism and the mobility of a free modern society, but nearer to the latter.

A son normally followed the profession of his father; he was engaged in his father's business or workshop during the latter's lifetime, either as his employee or his partner, and would take over after his death. Similarly in the professions, we encounter families of doctors, of judges, and of lower community servants, such as cantors or scribes. A man would be called "the son of the clan of sieve-makers," "of indigo-dyers," "of scarf-makers"[13] or "the son of the judge," "the son of the doctor," and, as far as family names existed, about one-fourth of them (but not more, probably less) designated occupations.

As it was not always feasible, or perhaps even desirable, that all the sons, or even any sons, should do the same work as their father, we often find a man embracing an occupation of a type different from, but similar in social status, to that of his family. A Muslim silk-weaver, *qazzāz*, was the son of water carrier; the sons of a man keeping poultry became vendors of dried fruits; the son of a producer (and/or seller) of sal ammoniac, a worker in silk *ḥarīrī*, both common occupations; and the son of a scribe—a cantor.[14] A prominent physician's son and grandson acted as the merchants' representatives, a very honored position, while his great-grandson would return to the medical profession.[15] When the name of a person is followed by two occupations, the first

designates his family name, or the occupation of his father, and the second his own, and often little change in status is involved, as in the combination "the money-assayer, the money-changer."[16]

Many occupational shifts are indicated in the Geniza, however, which definitely represented advancement in social status. Thus we read about a physician whose father was a tuna fish monger, or another whose father operated an oil press, cases reminiscent of a Muslim doctor, famous also as a writer, who was the son of a baker and so poor that he was unable to pay the apprentice's fees demanded by the doctors (wherefore he later propounded the theory that medicine is better learned from books than from teachers).[17] The name Mawwāz, "grower or vendor of bananas," was borne both by a receiver of one loaf of bread from the community and by the proprietor of a seagoing vessel carrying huge cargoes.[18] A mason was in receipt of four loaves, while a man called Mason donated a very considerable sum toward the building of a synagogue.[19] In many cases we find persons bearing names derived from manual occupations, such as spinner, potter, saddler, in the capacity of traders of high-priced goods, such as Oriental spices, or as shipowners, while the memorial lists show that some noble families have names indicating a very humble origin.[20] It is no exaggeration to say that at least half the terms designating craftsmen discussed in the subsequent sections appear in the Geniza documents as family names of persons belonging to the merchant or professional classes. In our own society such rise on the social ladder is commonplace (although it is not as easy as people who read about it in the newspapers are perhaps inclined to believe); for the eleventh century it is noteworthy.

In brief, birth determined the status of a person in Mediterranean society to a certain extent, but by no means as much as it did in the contemporaneous feudal world. Natural gifts and good luck enabled a man to move up into a higher class. The classes themselves were differentiated not only by occupation and wealth, but by other, less tangible factors, such as religiosity, knowledge, integrity, and public service. Still, as occupation, together with the economic position normally connected with it, was the main, although not the exclusive, divider of society, it is practicable to take it as the basis of our classification.

## 2. THE CRAFTSMEN

Factories in the modern sense of the word, that is, plants where large numbers of wage earners are engaged in the production of great quantities of one or of closely related commodities, rarely appear in the Geniza, just as big industry was unknown in ancient Rome.[1] The normal form of production was that of a small workshop run by a

single craftsman, a family, a clan, or by a number of partners, usually not more than five. In wholesale commerce large quantities of wares, often quoted in round numbers, were handled, but these, as far as we are able to perceive, were not delivered by one workshop, but handpicked in a bazaar or ordered from various producers.

Only two industries seem to have been carried on, at least partly, in larger plants. The sugar *maṭbakh*'s (literally: places of cooking) were real landmarks in the topography of the Egyptian capital, often referred to in the Geniza and diligently registered by the Muslim antiquarians. Sometimes, such a factory was worth well over a thousand dinars, while an ordinary workshop could be operated with a capital of less than ten. Thus we must assume that a sugar factory of the size of the one described in Appendix C, section 26, must have employed a great number of laborers. In Mamluk times, sugar became an important monopoly of the sultans.

Another industrial product manufactured in maṭbakhs of impressive dimensions was paper. Abū Sa'īd, a Maghrebi visitor to Egypt, remarks that the paper mills were confined to Fustat and not found in Cairo, the seat of the caliph. Egyptian paper was exported to Tunisia (example of an order: 5,000 sheets of fine paper and 1,000 of the Ṭalḥī type, see below), as well as to Yemen and India. From the Geniza we learn also that Spanish paper was regarded as being of high quality, especially for the purpose of copying books, while very great quantities were imported to Egypt from Damascus, the latter brand being the one most in demand, particularly during the eleventh century. One letter speaks of 28 camel loads of paper bearing the *'alāma,* or trademark, of one Ibn al-Imām of Damascus, for which the very high sum of 250 dinars was deposited as earnest money. At the same time, this trader sent to the very same Cairene firm twenty bales, *shikāra,* of Damascene paper, by sea via Tyre and, shortly afterward or before, another ten. From such details it might be inferred that paper, like sugar, was mass produced, at least by some industrialists. This would not be surprising. The manufacture of paper and sugar had no local tradition. These were industries that migrated from China and India, respectively, to Persia and thence to other Islamic countries. The Muslim historians tell us that paper originally was manufactured in large workshops belonging to governors and sultans. The Ṭalḥī paper, which was made in Egypt during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, was named after Ṭalḥa b. Ṭāhir, governor of Khorāsān (d. 828), one of the early operators of a paper mill in Islam. It is natural that the system of mass production was continued when the bourgeoisie took over these lucrative industries from the ruling class. About the life of the laborers in such factories, however, we do not read a thing in the Geniza documents. They are concerned with the capitalists and managers of the larger plants and with the partners in smaller workshops.[2]

Government establishments such as the caliphal mint were not or-

ganized as industrial plants. Skilled laborers worked there on their own account, forming partnerships of different sizes and conditions amongst themselves. Appendix C, no. 15, serves as an example. A letter from an artisan in Damascus, who was the spiritual leader of the small Karaite community in that city, shows that, at least at that period (around 1040), skilled laborers could be forced to work in a government textile factory. A recruiting officer, *mutawalli 'sti'māl,* picked out the best craftsmen, and, once in, they could not get out for years except through a caliphal rescript to be secured from Cairo. S. M. Stern has rightly shown that a petition to the caliphal throne was the normal procedure for anyone seeking redress against highhanded actions of local officials. But the very fact that, in the case described, recourse had to be taken to this procedure shows that skilled laborers were pressed into the service of such government workshops much against their will. The writer bitterly complains that he was unable to participate in the social and spiritual life of his brethren, but makes no allusion to low wages or want. No doubt, he was paid in the same way as the workers in the mint, namely, by the piece.[3] Other government establishments are occasionally mentioned in the Geniza. Jalāl al-Dīn *ṣāḥib dār al-ṭirāz,* director of a government workshop for gala robes in Damietta, received a loan of 50 dinars from a Jewish bank for the duration of several years, and one wonders whether he needed it for the workshop (which is likely) or took it on his own account.[4] Similarly, we find a "supervisor of the construction of government ships" sending cash (how much is not stated) to a banker, presumably refund of a loan.[5] With the exception of the mint, where many Jews worked, we do not hear about the craftsmen in these establishments, mostly workshops for the imperial wardrobes.

On the other hand, the Geniza is a rich source for the day-to-day life of the craftsmen in general, their economic and social position, and their ways of cooperation. Much has been written about Islamic guilds.[6] Of the mass of literature, I found particularly instructive the chapter on the Muslim and Jewish artisans of Fez before the French Protectorate (which was imposed on Morocco in 1912) by Roger Le Tourneau. In this chapter the technical and social aspects of an indigenous industry are described with meticulous care and are judiciously checked against historical data. The artisans of Fez at that time were still organized in professional corporations, albeit of a somewhat looser texture than the medieval guilds of Christian Europe. The question is how far back in history does this phenomenon go. A recent study on the Byzantine guilds in the eleventh century takes it for granted that we know about Islamic guilds during that period more than we do with regard to the Byzantine. The opposite is the case. We look in vain for a term designating a guild in the Muslim handbooks of market supervision which have come down to us from the twelfth century and which deal mainly with the crafts and trades. There was no such term

because guilds in the strict sense of the word had not yet come into being. Members of one craft, even of different faiths, were connected with each other in many ways, such as geographical concentration, mutual financial help, and formal partnerships. But organized corporations of craftsmen of the type developed in Europe during the later Middle Ages, or in Islam during the fourteenth through the nineteenth centuries, are not attested in Arabic literature for the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Only after the Turkish element had become preponderant in Mediterranean Islam do we get reliable data on formally organized professional corporations. This negative testimony is confirmed by the positive and detailed evidence of the Geniza documents about the realities of the life of the craftsmen during that early period.

Members of one craft normally were concentrated in one locality. As far as the Geniza is concerned, this may be concluded from the many names of bazaars, streets, lanes, squares, and compounds (*dār*, often translated as "house") named after one or another group, such as clothiers, tailors, perfumers, coppersmiths, turners, chestmakers, woolworkers, manufacturers of leather bottles, makers of almond sweetmeats, oil-makers, and so on, or bearing the names of products such as silk, cotton, or milk, or of occupations such as spinning. Many of these names of localities in Fustat are known to us also from the excellent works of Muslim geographers and antiquarians, others are not.[7] For other Islamic cities, such as Damascus, we possess similar data. It is, however, doubtful, whether at the time of our records most of these localities were actually occupied exclusively by the crafts after which they were called. Clearly, there was no coercion in this respect. Thus, a document from fall, 1125, deals with a partnership for the manufacture of glass in a store that one party possessed in the "Street of the Coppersmiths" of Old Cairo and which had been used formerly for the selling of copper vessels. Another deed of partnership, dated 1104, refers to a grocery store "at the Gate of the Turners." A seller of potions had his shop on the "Bazaar of the Blacksmiths," a moneychanger's address was the "Street of the Coppersmiths," and the "Street of the Alchemists" was the seat of authorized money-assayers.[8] Most deeds referring to these localities deal with private homes situated in them owned by persons such as physicians or judges, who were in no way connected with the crafts after which those localities were called. The very fact that a twelfth-century Spanish handbook for market supervision strongly recommends that each occupation should be assigned a separate place seems to show that in practice much freedom prevailed in this matter in those times.[9]

Another indication of the geographical concentration of the various crafts is found in the Geniza lists of contributors, which are sometimes arranged, at least partly, according to the "business addresses," namely the bazaars where persons following the same profession had their shops, or where craftsmen working in adjacent fields, such as

melting silver or gold and polishing the completed coins, are listed as having been solicited at the same time. Even porters were stationed in groups, an arrangement that can still be observed in Middle East cities today.[10] On the other hand, we find mentioned together in one and the same list, alongside with groups of dyers or perfumers, individuals of different professions.[11] This also seems to point to the fact that the system of assigning a special locality to each profession cannot have been too rigid.

Artisans exercising the same craft in a town sometimes appear as a group or as a firm. "I lost much money through the painters [who did not pay for the dyes]"; and: "What the painters owe us can never be retrieved," writes a merchant from Qayrawān (early eleventh century). "The silk-workers are in trouble; they have not paid a thing; I shall sue them," we read in a letter from Alexandria (second half of eleventh century). Another letter from the same city and period refers to a somewhat different situation: "Do not worry about the silk-workers. With God's help I shall collect from them to your satisfaction all due to you from them." With reference to the same group a third merchant reports to his father: "I have collected the money due from the silk-workers." Such groups existed also in smaller towns. The Nagid Mevōrākh writes to the notable Abraham b. Nathan, whom he addresses as "The Favorite of the Community," a title indicative of the influential position he occupied throughout the Jewish communities of Egypt: "You wrote to me in your last letter about the situation of our coreligionists, the glassmakers in the [city of] Fayyūm. . . . I asked you, and I am asking you again, to mediate between them." An account from Sunbāṭ in Lower Egypt from July, 1150, notes "a debt to the community on the side of the dyers of Damsīs." These references should be understood in the light of the query submitted to Maimonides with regard to the silk-workers of Fustat and al-Maḥalla, discussed below, page 88. Such persons, when appearing as a firm, were partners conducting one or several workshops, eager to remain the sole producer in the field, but sometimes, as in the case of al-Fayyūm, were at loggerheads with each other.[12]

The *'arīf*, or head of a profession—as far as such an office existed—was not a leader elected by the members of his group, but a supervisor appointed by the market police in order to assist it in its fight against fraudulent practices.[13] The Geniza makes mention of this office rarely and only with reference to banking. It is perhaps noteworthy that the son and other members of the family of an 'arīf in Qūṣ, Upper Egypt, served as persons of trust to the Jewish chief justice in Old Cairo.[14]

The Islamic guilds of the later Middle Ages, just as their Christian counterparts in Europe, had a semireligious character. The Jewish corporations that sprang up on Islamic soil, such as those of the goldsmiths and embroiderers of Fez, or the *kaikji's*, or boatmen of Istanbul (seventeenth through nineteenth centuries), were similarly

confined to one religious community and fulfilled specific social and religious in addition to their general professional tasks.[15] No such exclusiveness is to be observed in the Geniza papers.

We hear of Muslim and Jewish silversmiths and glassworkers who run shops in partnership, each group taking off its own weekly holiday; of Muslim carpenters working partly as employees and partly as partners of a Jewish fellow carpenter, and even of a Jewish court inviting Gentile experts in purple-dyeing together with their Jewish colleagues to estimate the value of the equipment of a workshop forming part of the inheritance of an orphan girl.[16] Loans granted by a Muslim to a Jewish craftsman and vice versa are described on page 254, below.

The protection of the vested interests of the local artisans against the intrusion of foreigners—an important task of the later guilds—was entrusted in the period under discussion to the community at large. Several letters have been preserved in which grievances against competition by newcomers from Palestine and Lebanon were submitted to the Nagid of Egypt. Conversely, we have a moving letter from a group of artisans complaining that "the Jews," that is, the local community, did not permit them to practice their craft under penalty of excommunication. The fact mentioned on page 56, above, that foreigners composed the largest single group of receivers of alms from the public chest seems to indicate that it was not easy for nonresidents to find work. A man from Alexandria who had fled to Fustat with his little son because he was unable to pay the poll tax writes that he did not find anyone who was prepared to employ him, even for 1 dirhem a day. Most of the foreigners whose occupation is indicated in the lists of persons as having recourse to public charity were craftsmen.[17]

The manufacture and the sale of goods were as little separated in this period as they were in ancient Rome.[18] Thus, at the conclusion of a partnership, two silversmiths undertake to share their profits "obtained by work and sales." Another partnership is made for "tailoring and the sale of textiles." At the dissolution of a partnership between two weavers the relevant document states that, in future, no party would have any right to the earnings of the other "by trading or by weaving."[19] A "perfumer" normally sold perfumes, drugs, and spices, but would also produce rosewater in large quantities.[20] We find a bleacher as well as an embroiderer selling robes.[21] Therefore, the name of the occupation embraced by a person often is not sufficient to indicate whether he was mainly an artisan or a businessman. Thus, *naffāṭ* (from *nafṭ*, the same word as English *naphtha*) could designate a man processing petroleum, or one who sold it (or perhaps even a soldier who specialized in flame-throwing).[22]

The equipment of workshops is frequently referred to in legal deeds, which is natural, for "an artisan without tools is nothing," as a Hebrew medieval proverb has it.[23] Unfortunately, however, these references are

mostly of a general nature, as when a silk-weaver leaves all the implements of his workshop to one of his four sons. The equipment for purple dyeing referred to above, page 85, was valued at 50 dinars, a very high sum. An inventory of the workshop of a silk-weaver, dated 1157, contained thirty-two items, but most of them are either effaced or partly torn away. He possessed four looms, three combs for silk-weaving, three cylinders of wood on which the woven materials were rolled, two irons, one for the pressing of robes and another for the pressing of fabrics worn as turbans, wickerwork baskets full of warps, various quantities of bleached and other linen (which was woven together with silk), a small pot with weaver's reeds, copper threads covered with silver, and other items not preserved. The instruments taken away from a silk-weaver in Dahshūr (the village famous for its pyramids) counted twenty-six items, of which nine were different from those just mentioned. A charge against a carpenter of having his Muslim employees work on Saturdays gives an opportunity to describe such a workshop in operation.[24]

Peregrinating craftsmen are less frequently met with in the Geniza papers than one would expect. A woman writing from al-Mahdiyya describes the dire lot of her daughter whose husband, a dyer, "was one month in the village and six away." [25] Dyers from Old Cairo who traveled to Damietta for exercising their craft there and others who tried to do the same in Upper Egypt have left us documents (see App. C, nos. 12 and 20).

With the exception of foreigners and disabled persons, craftsmen seem not to have suffered by the curse of unemployment. Among the hundreds of requests for help preserved in the Geniza, so far not a single one has been found in which a local artisan would adduce as reason for his plight the fact that he was out of work. On the contrary, it seems that it was not always easy to get a craftsman, at least a satisfactory one. In a letter from the environment of Būṣīr four employers, engaged in the scutching of flax and the "beating" of hemp, compete for the services of the laborers available and partly snatch them away from each other. For the repair of a building carried out in summer, 1045, at least seven different masons succeeding each other were employed on twenty-four working days.[26] When a notable in Cairo wanted some mats, his representative in Alexandria (which was renowned for this industry) requested the Dayyān, or Jewish judge, to talk to a mat-maker, and after the latter had consented to do the job, the representative reported back to Cairo.[27] That artisans did not deliver the goods ordered in time was of course not peculiar to the period discussed. A book on market supervision notes this deficiency and fixes one week as the maximum delay allowed.[28] An exceptionally angry Geniza letter complains that the artisan, instead of returning the finished product, began to haggle about the price.[29] The compara-

tively high cost of skilled labor, discussed on page 94, below, is indicative of its scarceness.

The normal form of industrial cooperation, as reflected in the Geniza, was partnership, not employment. Even a craftsman with small means, or none, would not, as a rule, become a laborer and wage earner, but would conclude a partnership with one or more fellow craftsmen or with an outsider who would provide him with capital. The general and legal aspects of this most vital institution are treated on pages 169 ff., below. Here the main traits of industrial partnership are discussed.

Besides occasional references in letters, this discussion is based on twenty-seven documents, described in Appendix C.[30] They range in date between 1016 and 1240, with one, undated, being even later, in the amount of sums invested between 4 dinars (no. 7) and 1,510 dinars (no. 10), and in the duration of the contract between six and a half months (no. 9) to next to a lifetime (nos. 4 and 18). The industries concerned are gold- and silversmithing and other metal work (nos. 2, 4, 14, 15, 17, 21), dyeing (purple; nos. 1, 12; indigo; 18, 20; silk; 22), the manufacture of glass vessels (nos. 8, 9, 17, 19), weaving (nos. 3, 5, 13), silkwork (nos. 16, 22), tailoring (no. 6), tanning (no. 24), bread-baking (no. 7), the making of wine (no. 10) and cheese (no. 27), sugar factories (nos. 23, 25, 26), and a pharmacy (no. 11).

It is indicative of the "freedom of contract" that characterizes this period that the conditions of partnership varied widely from one document to another. The normal procedure for the cooperation between craftsmen consisted in capital and work put into the partnership in equal shares (nos. 4, 7, 22, five partners), the equipment and tools also being common property (stated only when required by special circumstances, as in no. 17). Profits and losses would be shared in the same proportion, and often a daily remuneration would be taken out of the "purse of the partnership." (Weekly payments out of the common stock have been found so far only in commercial contracts [see below, p. 175].) This remuneration would consist either in cash, for example, 1-½ dirhems per day (no. 11), or in lunch and supper for the partners, but not their families (no. 20), or would be left to the discretion of the partners, on condition that it should be the same for all (no. 9 and often). Sometimes, one partner was unable to pay his contribution in full at the writing of a contract and promised to do so at a later date (nos. 11, 21, 27). Only two documents (nos. 3, 10) state expressly that, for the duration of the contract, the working, or executive, member was not allowed to conclude another partnership. This lies, however, in the nature of industrial cooperation.[31]

In many cases—and these are particularly interesting—the contributions of the partners differed with regard to the capital invested, the equipment acquired or brought into the partnership, and the work to be done by the different members. Thus (in no. 9), one glassmaker paid in

20 dinars, while his partner did not contribute any capital, but received a personal loan of 10 dinars, on condition that the partner contributing the money would work only two "turns" a week, and he the rest. In another contract between two glassmakers, one paid in 199 dinars and the other only 6, contributing also a small quantity of raw material (no. 19). In a lawsuit involving three tanners in a small town of Lower Egypt, which had already been considered by Muslim courts three times and once had even reached the court of Abraham Maimonides, one was clearly the main provider of the capital, while the two others were unable to meet their obligations (no. 24). In another partnership of three (no. 4), the raw materials and most of the assets belonged to all members in equal shares, while of one particular debt, one-half was payable to one and two-quarters to the other two. In a fifth case, one partner provided the capital, but the other who provided the equipment as well as the running costs enjoyed some special privileges (no. 11).

We also hear about a "trust," a combination of two partnerships in two different cities. A successful silk cooperative in al-Maḥalla in Lower Egypt opened a store in Fustat in the neighborhood of another such corporation, lowering the prices. The latter, fearing that they would be unable to compete with the newcomers, combined with them in such a way that one of the partners from al-Maḥalla moved to Fustat and entered the workshop there and vice versa, while it was agreed that in each city there should be only one such workshop and that their capitals should not be merged. Maimonides was asked whether such an agreement was legal—he answered in the affirmative (no. 16). The very fact that such a question was raised seems to indicate that despite the freedom of contract people were anxious not to conflict with the law.

The short duration of some of these contracts (six and a half months [no. 9]; one year [nos. 2, 11, 19, 20]) is paralleled by similar conditions appearing in commercial partnerships. While short-term connections are natural in business relations, however, they seem to be somewhat impracticable for running a workshop. As the Geniza has preserved contracts for the continuation of partnerships, we may assume that the short terms stipulated in the original agreements were regarded as periods of trial.

Partnerships between craftsmen and persons supplying the money betray the same wide variety as those between craftsmen themselves. There could be one or more participants on both sides (one on each side [no. 5]; two investors, one worker [no. 2]; one investor and a number of artisans [no. 20]). The terms sometimes seem comparatively hard to us, as when one craftsman is obliged to return in cash the whole sum supplied (50 dinars out of a total of 65 invested) only two months after he would be notified to do so by his partner (no. 5). Sometimes they are exceptionally generous, as when a group of indigo dyers received

two-thirds of the profit (as laid down by Jewish law, cf. p. 176, below), but was not held responsible for losses endured through government requisitions, sinking of goods while in transport on the Nile, and other acts of God, and were even exempted up to 10 dinars from losses resulting from the operation of the workshop (no. 20). In the same contract, the dyers undertake to work "with their own bodies," that is, not to employ others. It is evident that the investor's personal confidence in the skill and devotion of his partners inspired the terms. A similar personal touch, but in a different vein, is to be found in number 2, where the artisan, a man from Tyre, Lebanon, promises to pay the heavy penalty of 20 gold pieces in case "he *speaks* about travel or longing to see his children and wife [in this order]."

It was quite exceptional that in a contract of partnership in a workshop neither party was engaged in the industry concerned. In one document, two physicians, father and son, admitted a scholar as partner in a "sugar factory" belonging to them, a total share of 100 dinars being brought in by him (no. 23). Since this was a comparatively small undertaking, it is not impossible that the two doctors actually looked after their sugar shop. In another contract, two brothers who had partly inherited from their father and partly bought from their other brothers a sugar factory accepted 400 dinars from one prominent personality and 200 from another with a view to forming a partnership with them in which the investors and the managers would have an equal share. Thus, the whole plant must have been valued at that time at around 1,200 dinars, an assumption confirmed by another document referring to the same building.[32] Although the two brothers were Lebdīs, scions of an ancient family of India traders, they obviously attended to their sugar factory in person (no. 26). In the fragmentary document number 25, only two notables are involved in the joint proprietorship of a (sugar) workshop, with no worker or manager participating.

Lifelong partnerships developed into relationships similar to, or even stronger than family ties. Thus, a dyer, setting out for the holy pilgrimage to Jerusalem, made provisions for his wife and children in the event that something happened to him, but appointed his partner as sole executor, trustee, and guardian. The workshop was valued at 150 dinars, not a small sum for the type of craft concerned (no. 18). Even more telling is the case where a testator did not appoint his brother, who also was his partner, but another partner as executor of his will, freeing him of any obligation to give an oath or to otherwise account for his dealings (no. 4).

We can form some idea of the earnings of craftsmen by comparison with the wages paid skilled laborers. According to the documents analyzed on pages 94 ff., below, a master artisan earned an average of six dirhems per day during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, while unskilled workers received between two and two and a half. It is also

significant that the majority of the lists of contributors to public appeals do not show a wide scale of social (or economic) differentiation, as does the list discussed above, page 78, but mostly list sums between a quarter and one or two dinars (or dirhems, as the case might have been), and the craftsmen were by no means always in the lower categories.[33]

Payments for work done or ordered are mentioned occasionally in Geniza letters, but much more material will have to be collected and coordinated with data on the cost of living in general before any valid conclusions can be drawn from them. As a rule, the craftsman did not provide the material, such as threads, fabrics, or metals. These were given to him by the proprietor and were weighed before and after the manufacture of the object ordered. "I do silkwork for 10 dirhems per pound," writes a man sojourning in Fustat to his mother, no doubt a weaver, since the quantity required from a dyer for that payment was at least thirty times as much (see p. 107, below). Around 1120, another silk-weaver in Old Cairo received 9-½ dirhems for weaving a piece of cloth 19-½ cubits long, that is, ½ dirhem per cubit.[34] Fifty years earlier, in Alexandria, a weaver of linen was paid 5 qīrāṭs of gold for 25 cubits, 1 qīrāṭ (worth then a little over 1-½ silver dirhems) for 5 cubits, which makes approximately 0.3 dirhems per cubit. The blanching and glossing of the same material in its entirety cost 3-½ qīrāṭs. A few lines later, the same letter reports that the weaving of two *maqṭaʿ* cloths and a neckpiece, *radda,* cost 14 qīrāṭs, and their bleaching and glossing, 6-½ qīrāṭs.[35] About the making of a linen *milḥafa* (which served both as a cloak and a bedcover) we read in a letter from the same city and approximately the same time: "I agreed [36] with its maker upon 22 qīrāṭs. Later on, I extracted from him a discount of 2 qīrāṭs and then 2-½ dirhems were deducted, namely, 1-½ dirhems which I had paid for the unravelling of the thread and 1 dirhem for silk. Thus, the whole price paid for it amounted to 37-½ dirhems." From another section of the letter it is evident that haggling about the price of a piece of silk manufactured by a craftsman was common even after its completion.[37] When a craftsman did not succeed in finishing an object ordered with the material provided to him, the dispute could reach "the government," that is, the market police. (Again a milḥafa, ordered in Alexandria by a merchant living in Fustat, this time one made of cotton.)[38]

For making a piece of jewelry out of 31 mithqāls (later in the same letter referred to as dinars) of base gold, a remuneration of 100 dirhems was paid to a goldsmith around 1190.[39] The Geniza contains hundreds of details concerning the prices of ornaments, but very little about the payment received by the craftsmen who created them.

Masons, carpenters, and sawyers, it seems, mostly worked on a day-to-day basis (see below). Naturally, there were also smaller repairs and orders for which special agreements had to be made. The smallest remuneration attested so far for a carpenter was ⅜ dirhem.[40] A repair

on doors and a staircase brought 1 dirhem to a carpenter at a time when ¾ dirhem had to be paid for nails needed for the same operation.[41] Specialists in the building of cesspools got 4 dirhems for making a drainpipe in a house belonging to the public chest.[42] For making (or repairing) the street entrance on another house of the same type, a mason was paid 3-½ dirhems.[43] For the remuneration of persons engaged in transport and in the mail service, compare chapter iv, sections 3 and 11.

*Melākhā-melūkhā,* "A craft is a kingdom."[44] In the light of our records, this medieval Hebrew pun (which is referred to in a Geniza letter) seems to be fully justified. It is true, craftsmen belonged to the lower strata of the society. But a skilled and successful artisan was a respected person who was addressed as "elder" (Ar. *shaykh,* Heb. *zāqēn*), just as was a merchant.[45] Manual work as such was not regarded as degrading. A Qayrawānese trader known to us from a number of letters as a widely traveled businessman did not believe it beneath his dignity to work parttime in tailoring when business in Egypt was at a standstill.[46] From many a Geniza letter we learn that a piece of clothing or household equipment was ordered from a craftsman mentioned by name living in another town, or was even sent to him for repair. Thus, by his skill and reliability he would acquire renown, and, we may assume, also a modest degree of prosperity and social acceptance.

The generally good standing of the craftsman in the Jewish society of the Geniza period had as corollary that we hear very little about despised professions, a subject conspicuous in postbiblical Hebrew literature and discussed at length by the lawyers of Islam. According to them, a member of such a profession was not qualified to marry a girl from a good family and could even be denied the right to appear as a witness in court.[47] Some of the occupations ostracized by Muslim lawyers, such as those of cleaners of sewers and cesspools, streetsweepers and bathhouse attendants, never appear in the Geniza as performed by Jews. Had the community of Fustat comprised such persons, some of them must have been mentioned in the many lists of indigent persons doing service jobs and assisted by the communal chest. The work of the cupper, or bloodletter which also was subject to disqualification according to the Muslim lawyers, was not despised because it was somehow a subsection of the highly honored medical profession. Prospective physicians tried to acquire chirurgical skill by the practice of bleeding.[48] We find a cupper contributing to a public appeal and addressed as "elder," another mentioned as an ancestor in a memorial list, and a third as receiver of a calligraphic letter dealing with a matter of inheritance, attended to by the Nagid.[49] In the contest between the rank and file of the community and the ruling oligarchy, members of the latter sometimes characterized their opponents as performing certain manual occupations of low esteem, such as those of

oyster-gatherers, dyers, and cobblers in Alexandria and potters in Fustat.[50] Such outbursts, however, are rare, and with the exception of the oystermen of Alexandria, who are mentioned elsewhere in a derogatory context, it was not the occupation as such, but the economic and social status reached which counted. The Geniza provides a good number of examples of affluent and respectable dyers.

In a few cases, we read that an artisan bore a title indicating that he was a scholarly man. "Make these threads into a cloth," says a letter, "and send it for me to the *ḥāvēr* to bleach and tailor it before the holidays." [51] The title ḥāvēr, or fellow of the academy, was given in those days only to persons who qualified as scholars. Another ḥāvēr was an *'aṣṣār*, that is, he operated an oil- or wine-press (his wife took a loan of 50 dinars as a mortgage on her house, certainly for him), a third one made pancakes—and in Constantinople, of all places.[52] There was nothing exceptional in a learned person being engaged in bleaching and tailoring or other manual work, for in this period we even find a Gaon at the head of the Jewish academy in Baghdad who had formerly been a weaver, a profession ranked as despised both in the Talmud and in Islamic literature.[53] Still, scholarship was not as common among the artisans we read about in the Geniza letters as it was in Palestine in the early centuries of the Christian era, or in the Jewish communities of Yemen as described by travelers in modern times. Not only were Yemenite weavers and silversmiths, that is, persons engaged in crafts requiring only a limited physical effort, known as scholars and authors of books, but even a Jewish blacksmith in Yemen who forged ploughshares and other agricultural implements all the day long, was described by a most competent observer as being learned in all religious subjects, including the esoteric doctrines, "like any of the great rabbis in Poland." [54] One of my own informants in the 1930's, a blacksmith from Ṣan'a, who had even made nails with his own hands (he was a beauty of a man) put me to shame by his knowledge of cabbala and ritual law.[55] During the Geniza period, the situation was different. Learning was mainly the domain of the mercantile middle class. It was the heyday of the bourgeoisie.

## 3. THE WAGE EARNERS

"I eat bread in the service of others; every minute of the day I gulp the cup of death because of my degradation and that of my children." These are the words of a Tunisian merchant who lost everything he possessed in shipwreck and was forced to enter the service of others after his arrival in Egypt.[1] A similar tone is sounded by Maimonides in a famous letter to one of his former disciples, in which he advises him not to accept an appointment by the Jewish Exilarch of Baghdad, but to earn his livelihood by commerce and teaching medicine and to teach

religious subjects without remuneration: "One dirhem earned on hire with a tailor, a carpenter, or a weaver is preferable to such an appointment." As we see, it is not so much the type of work done as the state of dependence on others which was deemed so humiliating. An intrinsically medieval society, such as that of the Jews of Yemen, almost all of whom had been artisans, but almost none employees, has preserved a similar attitude down to the middle of the twentieth century. The origin of this prejudice is perhaps to be sought in the similarity of service to slavery.[2]

The lamented Leon Arye Mayer, who devoted half a lifetime to the study of the craftsmen in classical Islamic civilization, defined the three grades of employees as follows: *tilmīdh,* pupil, *ghulām,* apprentice, and *ajīr,* journeyman.[3] The nomenclature in the Geniza records is somewhat different. The words ghulām, which means "young man," and *ṣabī,* "boy," are generally used for a person in service of another, whether as a free person or as a slave, in industry or in commerce. The idea behind this designation is that one served as employee only while young and in order to learn a craft, or profession, or to make oneself acquainted with local conditions. The words were used for persons long past the stage of apprenticeship, as when considerable sums of money were sent from one town to another with "Mr. Abu 'l-Bishr Salmān, the young man of Ibn Saghīr,"[4] or when two important powers of attorney were entrusted to "Isaac b. Barhūn, 'the boy' of Judah" traveling from Egypt to Tunisia.[5] In a list of contributors, a notable donates five quarters of a dinar, while his "boy," a Kohen, pledges one quarter, the "boy" of another also gives one quarter, but his employer only a quarter and a half.[6] A list of partial payments for the poll tax includes five persons called "young men" of so-and-so and three called "boys," but as far as the amount of the sums indicates, there was no difference between the two terms.[7] Minor government officials were also called "young men" or "boys."[8]

In order to describe a person more precisely as an employee, as different from a slave, he was called ajīr, literally "hireling," a term in use in legal parlance rather than in ordinary speech. A journeyman would be designated with the general term *ṣāni'*, which means both laborer and craftsman. The word would be used of a person working in a glass factory or a silk-weaving shop, but also for one in service of a "bride-comber," a woman who dressed up brides and took care of other arrangements for weddings.[9] In a brawl, a man would avail himself of the help of his son, his nephew, and his journeyman.[10] Persons engaged in the highly specialized craft of perforating pearls are described in an account as *'ammālīn,* workmen, used in the same document as synonymous with ṣāni'.[11] The difference between the ajīr and ṣāni', "hireling" and "laborer," on the one hand, and the ghulām and ṣabī, "young man" and "boy," on the other, seems to have consisted not so much in the degree of perfection in the craft or occupation concerned,

but the former designated more transient and businesslike relations with an employer and the latter more permanent and personal ones. It is therefore not surprising to read in a will that the testator left the not inconsiderable sum of ten gold pieces to the "boy" working with himself and his brother.[12]

Laborers engaged in work requiring less skill were designated by names indicating the type of help they normally provided. The most common was *raqqāṣ,* "runner," or "errand boy," which originally designated the laborer who carried the materials up to the mason working on the scaffolding, but was also used for other craftsmen's helpers, such as carpenters, and very frequently, for irregular policemen. A helper in a workshop was called *munāwil,* literally one who passes along or hands on, or simply ṣabī, "boy."[13]

Domestic work was normally done by female slaves. Therefore, we very rarely hear about "servants."[14] The word *khādim,* "servant," so frequent in the Geniza, designates the beadle of a synagogue, or a public servant in general. Sometimes it refers to the slave of a caliph, who often had an influential position.

The wages and conditions of employment were normally not put down in writing, wherefore we have mostly only indirect references to them. By chance, fragments of both the draft and final copy of one contract of employment, written in Old Cairo in the spring of 1057, have been preserved, so that we are in a position to know its full contents. This was an agreement between two partners and a laborer, ṣāni', all three being indiscriminately termed *zajjāj,* glassmakers. (A third fragment, from 1030, approximately, refers to "wages for the molding of glass.") The laborer undertook to work on the melting furnace for the duration of a year, consisting of twelve lunar months[15] and promised to do so "in truth and faithfulness." His remuneration would consist in 5 dirhems and lunch worth 1 dirhem on any day he worked. He would not work for anyone else during the period of the contract. In case he violated this undertaking, he would have to pay 5 dinars to the public chest (of the two synagogues in Old Cairo). As the contract has the form of an undertaking by the laborer ("I have hired myself out to . . ."), it does not state what penalty was incumbent on the employers, in case they did not adhere to the conditions of the contract. Since the wages were paid at the termination of each working day (see below), and since, as the condition not to work for others shows, workmen were more difficult to get at that time than employment, no difficulties from employers were envisaged.[16]

Simultaneously with the writing of this volume, Professor E. Ashtor is working on a book on wages and prices in medieval Islam in which he intends to make much use of Geniza material. For this reason, and also because I turn again to these questions while discussing the general standard of living of the Geniza people (Vol. III, chap. viii), I confine myself here to a few telling examples. Many more are included

in Appendix A to my study "The Social Services of the Jewish Community . . ." (cf. Abbreviations and Symbols).

The amazing stability of prices and wages in our period, to which Ashtor has drawn attention in his paper, "Quelques indications sur les revenus dans l'orient musulman au haut moyen âge"[17] is well reflected in the Geniza records. In a statement about expenses on repairs of a public building from the year 1199, a hundred and forty-two years after the contract of the three glassmakers just discussed, the daily wage of the laborer (a mason) is still 5 dirhems, and, in addition, he gets a lunch worth 1-¼ dirhems. The helpers receive 2-¼, the water carrier 1-½, and the overseer 2 dirhems (1 for half a day's work).[18] In an undated, similar statement, the mason again receives 5, the helpers, presumably, three, 6-½ on each day, the water carrier, 2-½ (depending obviously on the quantity of water supplied), and the overseer, 2 dirhems.[19] In an account dated 1183, on one day the laborer, called by name, together with his two helpers, received 10 dirhems, on the following day, he, together with his "boy," got 7, and the helpers, 5 dirhems. Thus, his own wage most probably was again 5, that of a helper 2-½, and of a "boy" 2 dirhems. His lunch cost 1-¼ dirhems. The overseer was paid 1-½ dirhems for each day.[20] From a fragmentary document whose date has not been preserved, where a mason, a carpenter, and their helpers are enumerated, we learn expressly that only the masters were given lunch worth ¾ dirhem for each, while the helpers received a daily wage of 2 dirhems. Only the carpenter's wage, which was 4 dirhems, is preserved. Similarly, a large account from Abū Ṣīr (Būṣīr), written around 1045, describes the packing of eight bales, which required two days and cost, besides the materials, which are listed separately, about 33 dirhems. In addition, the packers were given lunch, which cost 3 dirhems. Clearly, three packers were engaged, each receiving 5-½ dirhems per day, while the lunch cost ½ dirhem per person, again a total emolument of 6 dirhems for a skilled worker.[21]

The same consistency can be observed with regard to the payment of the overseer, whose task was to supervise the work and to register the expenses. This "white-collar" job brought between 1-½–2 dirhems, less than the lowest manual work. An autograph note by Moses Maimonides, who then was Head of the Jewish community of Egypt, authorizes an official to draw a daily stipend of 2 dirhems for the supervision of work on a public building—a confirmation of the conclusion drawn from the examples cited above that this was the standard remuneration for such a service.[22] In one elaborate, but unsigned (which probably means not approved), agreement such an overseer is said to have delegated his task to another for half a dirhem per day.[23]

Of particular interest is an extensive and detailed, though fragmentary, account regarding building operations carried out in the year 1040 in the synagogue of the Palestinians and in buildings belonging to it. For twenty-eight days of work, specified in the account, the master

mason received a lump sum of 2-¾ dinars, which sum corresponded at that time approximately to 110 dirhems. Thus, his remuneration was about 4 dirhems per day. In addition, he was given a lunch worth ¾ dirhem every day he worked. Each of his helpers received 2-¾ dirhems per day, but no lunch. A carpenter and his "boy" were remunerated with 6-½ dirhems, and the man who did the plastering of the interior with 4 dirhems. The fact that the mason was given lunch, although a gross sum had been stipulated for the whole work, shows that ancient custom was here in operation.[24]

Finally, an account written in or around 1183 deserves mention because it specifies the wages of many different workmen engaged in a building operation during nine consecutive days (with the exception of the Sabbath, of course). Again, the masons received 5 dirhems a day and so did the layers of floor tiles and the *tarrābīn* who made mortar out of clay (*turāb*), lime, and gravel. The "mixers," *khallāṭīn,* who did the rough work, were paid 3–3-½ dirhems, like the other assisting workmen, the "runners," or raqqāṣīn. The *mujayyirūn,* or stucco-workers, two of whom appeared on the fifth and sixth, and three on the seventh day, got 6 or 7 dirhems, while one "master," *mu'allim,* also received 7 and his "boy" (which here could mean his little son) 1 dirhem. Only the skilled laborers, such as the masons and the stucco-workers, received lunch. It should be noted, however, that in one instance, a report about repairs carried out in a synagogue around 1100, lunch was provided also for the "runners." All in all, the differences within the class of the skilled craftsmen or those within that of the helpers were not considerable.[25]

Needless to say, the economic law of supply and demand was not entirely absent from the labor market in the Middle Ages. We have had an inkling of its influence in the contract of 1057, discussed above. Even more telling in this respect is an agreement made between a wage earner (called ajīr, "hireling") and his employer in June, 1127, which regulated the payment of a debt owed by the former to the latter. The employee was to receive a daily payment of 2 dirhems (of which half a dirhem was deducted for payment of the debt). If he left his job at a time of brisk business, however, the wage would be reduced retroactively to 1-½ dirhems and, conversely, if his master dismissed him before the debt was paid back in full, the wage would be increased retroactively to 2-½ dirhems. In a similar contract, made ninety years later, in May, 1217, the employee receives 3 dirhems a day (of which 1 was deducted for the payment of a debt) for the duration of ten months. In case one of the two sides failed to fulfill the agreement, he was fined with 5 dinars, to be paid to the holy shrine of Dammūh, then the most popular place of pilgrimage for Egyptian Jews.[26] A third case of an employee being in debt to his employer and eager to leave his job is embodied in a moving petition by a Jewish silk-weaver whose fellow workers were Muslims, and a Jewish renegade who molested him. From

the correspondence of Maimonides it appears that such loans used to be given as advances to laborers when being hired by a master for permanent service.[27] Complaints about employees leaving their employers just when they were needed most, are not absent from the Geniza letters.[28]

According to both Muslim and Jewish law, "hire," that is, payment for the services of a person or the use of a thing, was due at the end of the period for which the payment was stipulated, normally a day for wages and a month for the rent of a house. Even when a man would "hire" his divorced wife for taking care of their little baby, payment would be made at the end of the month, as it was fixed at a monthly rate. While complaints by separated or divorced wives about delays in the remittance of alimony were frequent, so far no case of putting off of wages has been found in the Geniza records. Sometimes, an advance would be granted to a craftsman, which he would return in case he did not carry out the work ordered.[29]

As was common with public officials,[30] employees could be partly remunerated by their employers paying their poll tax. Thus, a Tunisian merchant mentions in a letter that he had paid 1-29/48 dinars for the poll tax of his packer.[31] Since, at the writing of that letter, a dinar comprised an average of 36 dirhems and a skilled laborer earned 5 dirhems a day, the packer had to work two weeks (12 working days) for his poll tax. In the case of the substitute for an overseer referred to above, page 95, it was expressly stated that he had worked for half a dirhem a day in order to be able to pay his poll tax to the amount of 1-2/3 dinars. With the dinar worth around 40 dirhems at that time, the poor man had to devote 132 working days to earn his poll tax.[32] When we find employees indebted to their employers, we may assume that the poll tax was largely to blame for that state of dependence.

As for working hours, a twelfth-century manual of market supervision states (under the heading "Carpenters, sawyers, masons, . . ."): "Most workmen make an agreement about a specified daily wage, but they come late in the morning and depart before evening. Terms must be made to prevent this." [33] This seems to indicate that the medieval Eastern craftsmen did not normally work from sunrise to sunset, although they most probably did not take it as easy as their colleagues in ancient Rome, who, according to Carcopino's ingenious, but perhaps too optimistic calculations, worked only seven hours in summer and less than six in winter.[34] Since the Geniza contains references to part-time work, there must have been accepted standards in this matter.[35] Presumably, much depended on the character and moods of the two sides concerned. Thus, according to a Geniza letter, the employee of an ophthalmologist complained that his employer (who was also his relative) exploited him too much and did not even leave him time for prayer.[36] Compare with this a statement in a Spanish handbook of market supervision, where the supervisor is advised to watch that the

retailers and "the boys" in the stores prayed regularly.[37] For a medieval Jew, the day normally began with the attendance of the morning service, only after which was one allowed to take breakfast, and many would attend also the communal service in the late afternoon. A young man, traveling from Mazara in southwestern Sicily, which then was Muslim, to Messina on the northeastern tip of the island, which had already been conquered by the Normans, wrote home that his father could have a good income if he emigrated to Messina, but that it was impossible to live in that town, for people there were already through with the morning prayer at dawn (it should last through sunrise) and there was no communal afternoon service at all.[38] The conditions of life, including the length of the working day, obviously varied from town to town.

The contracts on manual labor discussed thus far were all based on daily wages, even if they were concluded for a prolonged period such as a whole year. The same was the case with the Coptic linen-weavers of the famous industrial center of Tinnīs, who were engaged in that work for all their lives, but still were paid daily.[39] There were also other types of work contracts. We read in a Geniza letter about what seems to have been seasonal laborers namely "flax-combers," who lived with their employer, that is, got full board, received half a dinar per month in cash, and, moreover, were given working clothes, also of the value of half a dinar. The writer of that letter complains that for a young man sent to him he had to buy clothes at a price far in excess of the usual half a dinar and states that he would take him back only if he accepted the usual conditions of work as other young men of his type.[40] In a letter from the beginning of the thirteenth century a workman asks his future employer what would be his *weekly* wages. Thus, while daily payment was the normal form of remuneration for manual work (so already in the Bible, Deuteronomy 24:15), occasionally other arrangements were made as well.[41]

Child labor is almost never mentioned in the Geniza papers, which is somewhat surprising, since so many other aspects of poverty are evident in them. The insistence of the Jewish community on the schooling of orphans and the children of the poor, so vividly manifested in the Geniza records,[42] might have acted as an obstacle to the spreading of the evil of child labor. A particularly sad case is reported in a letter from Alexandria, dated October 21, 1219, by a former official of the imperial mint of Old Cairo, who had lost his post, his house, and all his possessions. He hired out his boy, who walked naked in the streets, to a tailor who paid him half a dirhem per week. At the same time, four pounds of bread cost 1-⅛ dirhems. Thus, the boy's daily ration consisted of about a quarter of a pound of bread. But the very eloquent letter was addressed to the rich sister of the writer, and was probably exaggerated for obvious reasons. Moreover, it was written at the time of the invasion of the Franks—Damietta was taken by them on No-

vember 5—and, as indicated in the letter, the impositions connected with the war had a terrible effect on the population of Alexandria in general.[43] Thus far, no contract has been found in the Geniza comparable to one contained in a papyrus from the year 877 in which a father hired out his son against the provision of food and clothing.[44]

In conclusion, employment was not the most common form of labor reflected in the Geniza records. Cooperation largely took place through partnership. As far as persons were employed, it was done, as a rule, on the basis of daily wages. These were rather stable throughout the centuries and ranked from 1-½ to 3 dirhems for untrained or low-grade workers to 4–7 dirhems for skilled masters. The wages for copyists and similar "white-collar" jobs were among the lowest paid.

## 4. THE MAIN INDUSTRIES

While scanning the Geniza records for the arts and crafts mentioned in them, the modern observer is impressed by the great number of occupations and by the high degree of specialization and division of labor apparent in them. The terms for about 265 manual occupations have been identified thus far, as against 90 types of persons engaged in commerce and banking and approximately the same number of professionals, officials, religious functionaries, and educators. With this total of around 450 professions compare the 150 or so professional corporations traced in ancient Rome by J. T. Waltzing in his monumental *Corporations professionelles* on the one hand, and the 278 *corporations de métier* listed by André Raymond for Cairo in 1801, on the other. The collection of 435 colorful descriptions of Damascene occupations, begun by Muhammad Sa'īd Qāsimī during 1890 through 1900, and continued after his death by his son Jamāl (but published only in 1960) also includes agricultural laborers of different types, long lists of shopkeepers selling specialties, as well as musicians and other persons engaged in the entertainment business.[1]

Division of labor prevailed in the Geniza period not only in the great industries of textiles, dyeing, and clothing, of metals, glass, and pottery, and of building and food, as shown in the following, but also in many smaller branches. These examples may serve as illustrations: makers of kohl sticks, of writing cases (in which the scribes kept pen and ink attached to their belts), mirrors, fans, spindles, sieves, combs (for hair and industrial purposes, in particular flax), manufacturers and stringers of beads of various descriptions, perforators of pearls, persons processing corals, or making ordinary or braided mats.[2] A kohl stick (with which black eyelid powder is applied) is a small and trivial object. But, when we read in various marriage contracts that among a bride's trousseau such sticks are listed as valuable items, being made of all kinds of material, such as crystal, gold, or silver, we understand

that a man could well make a living by specializing in their production. In every household, one or several women devoted a part of their time to spinning; thus the demand for spindles must have been large enough to encourage people to concentrate on making them. Beads and corals were commodities that loomed large in the Mediterranean, as well as in the Indian trade, and, naturally, they needed processing before being shipped. Mats, of course, were found in every private home and public building; they are mentioned very often in letters, as ordered, or sent as a present, from Alexandria to Old Cairo or Qayrawān, or from Aden, South Arabia, to India. A mat-maker could be an expert, carefully chosen for his task, and there are letters where mats are ordered to measure and described in detail.[3]

It is odd to find a man designated as a "sawduster." We know, however, that sawdust was used, instead of sand, to dry a freshly written page, and as this material has actually been found between the leaves of ancient Arabic manuscripts from Spain, there were obviously persons who specialized in the collecting, handling, and selling of sawdust.[4] Since cushions and pillows represented a prominent part of the equipment of a Mediterranean home, it is natural that "downers," the processors and sellers of down, formed a profession by themselves.[5]

In many cases we read about an object made, but not what the profession of its maker was called. Thus, more than thirty different types of containers in which goods were shipped are mentioned in the Geniza letters, but only for one, the wickerwork baskets, has the designation for their manufacturer been found in a Geniza record—a craftsman from the island of Jerba off the Tunisian coast.[6] From the evidence preserved, though, we may safely conclude that almost each container was manufactured by a different type of craftsman, and that, in general, the actual number of manual occupations represented in the Geniza papers was a multiple of the 265 listed so far.[7]

In some cases, the occupations mentioned were dominated either by Muslims or Christians.[8] Mostly, however, the reference is to Jews, and, here, one has to bear in mind that religious and ethnic communities used to specialize in certain professions, just as this was the case with families and clans. I vividly recall a visit to a large factory for tourists' souvenirs in Damascus in 1924, where the local Christians did the woodwork, the Armenians made objects from mother-of-pearl, while the Jews were the copper- and silversmiths. A similar denominational and ethnic division of labor was in operation in Geniza times. The Jews were prominent in the textile industry and, above all, in silk-work, as well as in dyeing, which was a pronouncedly Jewish profession in all countries and in which they were thought to have professional secrets.[9] The production of glass was another favorite Jewish occupation and so was metalwork of all descriptions, but mainly silversmithing. Finally, many Jews were engaged in the food

industry, while pharmaceuticals, which was even more closely connected with medicine than it is today, was to a large extent Jewish.

It is, however, most characteristic of our period, which was comparatively free of castelike separation and restrictions, that religious and ethnic occupational divisions were by no means rigid. We find Muslim silk-workers, dyers, tanners, glassmakers, or pharmacists alongside their Jewish fellow workers, even Muslim scholars, either whose families engaged in these occupations or who worked at them in person.[10] The handbooks of market supervision, whether from Spain or from the East, do not indicate that any occupation was confined to a certain community. Accordingly, the Geniza shows us Jews in practically every way of life, from vizier [11] down to blacksmith and sailor. But their preponderance in certain occupations was a fact. Therefore, the sketch of the main industries reflected in the Geniza records that follows is to be taken as a cross section, rather than as a complete picture, of the immensely rich gamut of Mediterranean arts and crafts practiced during the High Middle Ages.

*Textiles and dyeing.*—Comparable to the place of steel and other metals in modern economy, textiles represented the major industry of medieval times in the Mediterranean area. As far as the statistical data available allow us to gauge, a very great proportion, perhaps the majority, of the working population and certainly of the distributing classes was engaged in this branch of economy. Textiles in those times were more durable and more expensive than they are nowadays and they seem to have been more variegated in fabric, color, and provenience than ours. Fantastic prices were paid for single selected pieces, the so-called *a'lāq;* this we know not only from literary sources, which may be suspected of exaggeration, but also from business letters found in the Geniza. Clothing formed part—sometimes a considerable part—of a family's investment, being transmitted from parents to children, to be converted into cash in case of an emergency. The furniture of a house consisted mostly of various types of carpets, couches, cushions, canopies, and draperies—objects produced mainly by the textile industry. All this explains why the latter was of such paramount importance.

The general terms for spinner and weaver are not common in the Geniza.[12] Normally, a man is designated by a word referring to the special branch of industry in which he was active, such as silk, flax, or wool, or some more closely defined textile. It is to these that we now turn our attention.

It is appropriate to open our survey with the silk industry, for this material, "which combines strength with lightness, durability with beauty and cleanliness with luster" [13] was favored in our period above all others. Silk was produced all around the Mediterranean, even in countries where climatic conditions were not favorable to sericulture,

such as Egypt. Still more impressive is the ubiquity of the industry itself. Silk was woven and dyed not only in Fustat and Alexandria, but also in the small towns of the Egyptian Rīf. This is known to us from business letters referring to raw silk that was sent to such places, or was bought there from itinerant merchants, as well as from contracts of tax farming concerned with the licenses for silk-weaving and silk-dyeing in small towns. There are repeated references to silk-workers in al-Maḥalla.[14] Women, too, were engaged everywhere in the unraveling and reeling, as well as in the weaving and dyeing of silk.

The leading country in the production of silk in our period, at least as far as the Geniza records go, was Spain.[15] It exported cocoons and raw silk, as well as finished products. The origin of this prominence is perhaps to be sought in the fact that in early Islamic times Spain was chiefly colonized by people coming from Syria and Lebanon, countries with an ancient sericulture. Second to Spain was Sicily. Some Byzantinists still seem to believe that the silkworm and the industry connected with it were brought to Sicily by the Normans, when they sacked the flourishing cities of Greece in 1147 and forcibly settled its skilled laborers, male and female, in their own kingdom. Over a hundred years ago, however, Michele Amari expressed his conviction that the silk industry of Sicily must have been far older—a conviction vindicated by abundant testimony from the Cairo Geniza. Throughout the whole of the eleventh century we find both raw silk, called Sicilian, and silk fabrics leaving the shores of the island, either from its western points, Palermo and Mazara, or at Syracuse in the east.[16] In addition to the usual filaments, Sicily produced, on the one hand, a very high-priced variety, and, on the other, a cheaper sort, called *lāsīn,* a term extremely frequent in the Geniza records, but, it seems, not yet found anywhere else.[17]

Tunisia, too, was a great exporter of silk and appears as such in almost every business letter sent from or to this country. Since, however, in all these letters, as far as I am able to see, no variety of silk is called by the name of the country or one of its towns, as is the case with regard to Spain and Sicily, one is inclined to believe that references throughout are to reexport and, in some cases, this is expressly stated. A note going back to the eleventh century geographer al-Bakrī states that Gabes was the only place in Tunisia where mulberry trees were planted and silk produced. Thus far, no mention of Gabes silk has been found in the Geniza.[18] The flourishing textile industry of Tunisia processed Spanish and other silk, just as it did with Egyptian flax or Sicilian cotton.

It is amazing how little we hear in the Geniza about silk from Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. As is well known, silk was an important article of export from the Crusader states of the Levant, and Damascus was world famous for its silk products (hence English *damask*).

Naturally, the Geniza records are not entirely reticent about Syro-Palestinian silk and silk products, but these occasional references dwindle to insignificance, if compared with the broad and steady flow of information about the import of these materials from the West.[19] It was perhaps the devastation of Syria and Palestine during the eleventh century, so frequently referred to in our sources, which is to be blamed for this state of affairs, while, after the advent of the Crusaders, Europe most probably constituted a more profitable market for Syrian silk than Egypt.

The products of the renowned Byzantine silk industry, in particular its brocade, its mandīls, and the materials used for upholstery, were very much in demand in other Mediterranean countries.[20] It is, however, most remarkable that, with one possible exception, the Geniza records do not speak of Byzantine *raw* silk as traded outside the frontiers of the empire. This cannot be mere chance. Rather, it reflects an imperial policy, which restricted the export trade to finished products, as indeed, is expressly stated in the "Book of the Prefect," chapter vi, paragraph 16: "The raw-silk dealers are not to sell silk to Jews or to [other] merchants for resale outside the city." [21]

Iraqian raw silk, we learn, was traded in Alexandria, which seems to have served as the exchange center of this material for all Egypt.[22] Iraq also had a silk industry of its own. In this respect, however, it was by far surpassed by its eastern neighbor, Iran. Despite its geographical remoteness, Iran was one of the main, if not the main, supplier of high-priced silk fabrics for the Mediterranean countries during this period. Of first rank in this respect was Ṭabaristān, the same district south of the Caspian Sea, which, in later centuries, was the main source of imported silk goods for most of Europe too. Other important centers of the silk industry were southwestern Iran, from which the Tustarī, Qurqūbī, and many other popular silk fabrics came, and Khorāsān in far northeastern Persia with its *ibrīsim* and other specialities. Most of the Iranian silks were imitated in the West, but for the eleventh century we have express references to imports from Iran.[23]

"Local," namely, Egyptian, silk was of an inferior quality, its price being between one-quarter and one-third of the average. Since a mother writing from Alexandria asks her son in Old Cairo to procure her some, it must have been grown in the south, most probably in the Fayyūm, to which province five hundred Syrians again transplanted the cultivation of mulberry trees and the raising of silkworms early in the nineteenth century. One of the fraudulent practices of Egyptian weavers was to mingle "local" with Syrian silk and to sell it as Syrian.[24]

The wide geographical distribution of sericulture accounted in part for the great variety of silk fabrics encountered in the Geniza records;

another factor was the refined techniques of processing and dyeing silk and combining it with other fibers, such as flax or wool, or with gold or silver threads.

If we exclude the dyers, silk-workers were of two categories: the handlers of the cocoons and of raw silk, *ḥarīrī*, and the weavers, *qazzāz* (including the specialist *mulḥim*, who wove a silk warp with a woof of another material). The cocoon of the silkworm consists of two different parts: a core of compact, continuous filament—the only animal fiber that needs no spinning; this has to be unraveled and reeled, a task confided to specialists called *naqqāḍ*, or "unraveler." For although this work may be done even by children, it requires expert knowledge and great dexterity to do it in a commercially sound way. "Do not move with your silk," writes a merchant from Alexandria to his correspondent in Old Cairo, at a time when the material was scarce, "except in the event that trustworthy unravelers are available, who might unravel a small quantity [literally: "a small reel"] good for the countryside," that is, who were able to pick out the inferior variety traded outside the capital.[25]

The layers of loose filament covering the core of the cocoon (the so-called waste silk) have to be spun like other fibers. As opposed to *manqūḍ*, unraveled silk, we often find in the Geniza letters *maqshūr* or *muqashshar*, "peeled off" silk and the worker handling it called *muqashshir* "peeler."[26] It is interesting that the modern Italian word for floss silk (tangled waste silk), *catarzo*, already appears in a business letter of the eleventh century (in the form *qaṭārish*). Fraudulent weavers mingled it with raw silk, after both had been dyed.[27]

The preponderance of Jews in the silk industry as reflected in the Geniza records might have had its origin in the fact that it was an ancient local industry in Palestine,[28] or in the wide-ranging travels of the Jewish Rahdāniyya merchants of the ninth century, which brought them regularly to China, where they might have had opportunity to make themselves acquainted with the professional intricacies of silk production.[29] The two factors might have acted in combination and there were, perhaps, others such as the reluctance of the Muslim divines to approve of the wearing of this luxurious material. In any case, the Jews by no means had a monopoly in this branch. In his studious Ph.D. thesis about the economic activities of Muslim scholars prior to the time of the Crusaders, quoted above, Hayyim J. Cohen found no less than 131 who either bore the family names silk-worker, silk-weaver, or silk merchant, or were reported as having been actually engaged in these occupations.

Flax looms very large in the Geniza, even larger than silk, or indeed than all other fibers combined. For flax was the main industrial crop of Egypt, and at least 22 local varieties appear in our records. It is the trade, however, not the industry, which is reflected in them, and therefore the discussion of these details is reserved for chapter iii. The word

*kattān,* which in Arabic designates both flax and linen, should in most cases be taken in the first meaning, for it was flax fiber, not linen fabric, that formed the main object of international trade, as far as reflected in the Geniza. Consequently, we mostly hear about work connected with the preparation of flax and not the weaving of linen.

After having been pulled, the flax plant has to be retted, that is, soaked in water in order to separate the fiber from the woody core. While exposed to dampness, the plants have to be turned. These operations were done by the farmers themselves. Therefore, the product in this stage of preparation was called in the technical language of the Geniza letters "flax of the farmers." [30] After this, the "flax-workers" took over, first to do the scutching, that is, the beating of the dried plant in order to separate the fiber from the seeds, the seeds to be used for the preparation of "hot oil" or "seed oil," as it was called at that time. In this stage, too, the flax was traded, designated as "scutched flax." [31] Then came the hatcheling, that is, combing out, disentangling, and cleaning of the fibers, a most responsible task, as the quality of the yarn depended largely on this operation. Three times it is said in one letter that the addressee should supervise "the combing" himself and not buy flax that had already been hatcheled. A scholarly merchant who was on the eve of a trip to Yemen, "had it not been for the famine," was asked by his correspondent to go to Sunbāṭ and to have the flax combed there in person.[32] After this operation, the flax fiber was ready for spinning. The combed-out scrap of flax was also an article of trade.[33] When a bashful young Jewish man is recommended in a letter as being very good at kattān work, certainly the scutching and hatcheling of flax, not the artistic weaving of linen, was intended.[34] Weaving was the domain of the heirs of ancient Pharaonic Egypt, the Christian Copts.

Cotton, today the staple crop of Egypt, was of no great consequence in our period. In its raw state, it was imported into Egypt both from Syria and from the West (Sicily, Tunisia), as we read repeatedly in the Geniza records.[35] Cotton *goods,* of course, were one of the main imports, both from Tunisia and from India. Therefore, we hear much about the trade in cotton, but next to nothing about its manufacture.[36]

Sheep-breeding seems to have been ubiquitous owing to the then very vital cheese production connected with it, and wool must have been available everywhere for industrial purposes. Egypt appears in the Geniza papers both as an exporter and as an importer of wool and hair.[37] Any clothing, including even the huge *buqyār* turbans, could be made from this material, and, as far as finer fabrics are concerned, as in classical times it was used in particular for purple cloth.[38] Wool-makers or sellers, *ṣawwāf,* are frequently mentioned, but no noteworthy technical details about this industry have been listed so far.[39]

In addition to the main textiles, silk, flax, cotton, and wool, some minor fibers are mentioned in the Geniza records, such as hemp, which

was used for the manufacture of ropes. A Jewish ropemaker, designated as *ḥabbāl,* the term still used in Damascus, possessed a house in that city. A person engaged in the same occupation in Fustat, addressed as "illustrious elder" in a letter, was called *aḥbālī.* A fanciful material was "sea wool," made of threads produced by a large marine mollusk, which have a golden luster and take on various colors during the day. Known in Italy from Roman times to the present day, it was counted by the Muslims as one of the marvels of "the West," and the Umayyad rulers of Spain used to forbid its export. In a large order for precious textiles we find also one for two covers of sea wool, each twenty-four cubits long and woven together with green and red silk.[40]

The high degree of specialization and division of labor, noted above as characteristic for the industry of the Mediterranean area in the High Middle Ages was particularly conspicuous in the dyeing industry. This was due to the enormous variety of colors, favored in those times, and to the great skill and experience required in using the many natural and industrial dyes available. While men today are normally satisfied with various shades of gray, brown, blue, black, and white, the medieval man, like tropical singing birds, liked, in addition to these colors, green, red, and intense yellow, and, above all, intricate nuances with all kinds of "glitter," "gloss," iridescence, stripes, waves, and patterns.[41] Needless to say, the fair sex did not lag behind in this respect, although the colorful fabrics were displayed within the four walls of a house or the "Turkish" bath, rather than in public. The carpets, couches, and drapery decorating the rooms showed the same variety in coloring and treatment as the clothing.

The Geniza people were by no means barbarians running riot with colors. The careful descriptions of the exact hues desired and the frequent requests that the colors of the parts of a dress ordered—even of shoes and a dress—match each other, betray taste, although most probably a taste different from our own. Moreover, as we learn both expressly and indirectly, there were marked differences between one country and another in this respect. Iran, it seems, was most extravagant in its predilection for variety in colors, while austere Jerusalem, and Palestine in general, preferred simple black and red. In any case, the taste of the people represented in the Geniza papers was widely different from that of the Iraqian dandies of the early-tenth century known to us so well from a special study devoted to them by a contemporary.[42]

In order to give the reader an idea of the color-intoxication of this age, a few quotations from orders for textiles and from lists of trousseaus are given here: "Five fine covers, one gazelle blood, one pure violet, one musk-colored [i.e., reddish brown], one silvery, one intense yellow; two others pure, clean white, inclining to yellow." "Eight pairs of [small] prayer carpets, two white, two indigo blue, two green, two red." "Please, my lord, the red should be as red as possible, likewise the

white and the yellow should be exquisite, I was not satisfied with the yellow. . . . The siglaton robe is of the utmost beauty, but not exactly what I wanted, for it is white and blue, while I wanted to have, instead of the latter, onion color, an 'open' color. The lead-colored [i.e., bluish gray] robe is superb, better than all the rest." [43]

In the lists of the clothing and bedding brought in by a bride, colors are not regularly indicated, because the description of an item and the fabric from which it was made were sufficient for its identification. Therefore the reader has to bear in mind that the specifications given here for two such lists refer only to a minority of the materials mentioned. The trousseau of the daughter of an India merchant, married in Old Cairo in 1146, contained items in the following colors: white, 6; cloud blue, 3; cloud blue with gold threads, 1; pomegranate red, 4; blue, 3; pearl-colored, 2; ash gray ("color of bamboo crystals"), 2; green, 2; saffron, 1; not yet identified, 4.[44] Another bride, from the same time and environment, had quite a different taste: pearl-colored, 4; white with golden threads, 3; violet, 2; blue, 2; unbleached linen, 2; basil-colored (brownish violet), 1; sky blue, 1; cloud blue, 1; white, 1; gilded, 1; emerald, 1; sand-colored, 1; not yet identified, 4.[45]

In the face of such demands on their art, the dyers had to specialize according to the coloring matter used by them. Thus we find specialists in crimson, saffron, sumac, purple, vermilion, or indigo, and so on.[46] Even when a person was not called *qirmizīnī*, *za'farānī*, or *sammāq*, that is, dyers with crimson, saffron, or sumac (the English words are derived from the Arabic), but was designated by the general word dyer, we hear occasionally that one was engaged in dyeing red or another in dyeing silk with turquoise blue.[47] In legal deeds, too, the dyes used in the workshop referred to would be indicated.[48] All this points to a high degree of specialization in this industry.

The dyeing represented a large percentage of the final cost of a fabric. An eleventh-century account gives the following details:

| | Dinars |
|---|---|
| Unbleached silk, 66 pounds | 300 |
| Loss [49] on these | 20 |
| Crimson for the dyeing | 85 |
| Expenses (customs, etc.) | 25 |
| Wages for the dyers | 20 |
| For dyeing antimony-black and green [50] | 24 |
| Total | 174 |
| Grand Total | 474 |

Quantity of dyed silk, 63 pounds.

Thus, out of a total cost of 474 dinars, 129 dinars, more than a quarter, were spent on the dyeing. The price of the coloring matter was more than four times as much as the wages for the dyers.[51]

In addition to dyeing, fibers and fabrics had to undergo various other treatments before being ready for use, in particular processes of bleaching and blanching, about which we read very much in the Geniza records. These, as well as other aspects of the clothing industry, such as glossing, tailoring, lining, and embroidery are treated in my chapter on clothing (Vol. III, chap. viii, sec. C). Each process and each piece of clothing was attended to by a separate group of artisans specializing in it. Some of these groups were very large, such as the *ghalā'ilīs,* the manufacturers of the *ghilāla,* or women's undergarments; the *maqāni'īs,* makers of the *miqna'a,* or women's scarves; or the *farrā's,* or furriers. Others manufactured pieces of clothing worn only by special groups of the population, such as the *ḥibrāwīs,* makers of a dark veil with which ladies of a certain class used to cover themselves while going out. Jews manufactured the *ḥibrā',* but no Jewish bride ever got one in her trousseau.[52]

*Metals, glass, and pottery.*—Next to textiles, metals and minerals, and above all the gold, silver, copper, and iron industries, were predominant in medieval arts and crafts. Goldwork and silverwork, including jewelry in general, must be mentioned first, because in actual life they occupied a position quite different from the one they have today. Besides their function as ornaments, they served largely as a means of investment and savings. A great variety of forms and combinations of metals and precious stones appear in the lists of trousseaus and other Geniza documents, and even where gold and silver were traded as metal, the merchants preferred to have them in ornaments rather than in bars. Moreover, silver vessels were much more in use than they are nowadays. As for copper, many of the better kitchen utensils were made of this material, which appears regularly near the end of longer lists of marriage portions, as do gold and silver ornaments at their beginnings.

The general word for goldsmith and silversmith in Arabic, *ṣā'igh,* means "one who gives form." It was used all over the Arabic-speaking world, and, like French *orfèvre* and Spanish *platero,* referred to both metals, perhaps because they were normally handled by one and the same artisan. Despite the meaning of the term, we find the ṣā'igh occupied with the refining of precious metals in Egypt in the twelfth century and in Morocco in the eighteenth. There must also have been specialists for goldsmithing, as the relevant word *dhahabī,* "gold man," is encountered very frequently in the Geniza, although curiously enough, it is not registered in the Arabic dictionaries. The famous Muslim historian al-Dhahabī was called after the profession of his father who *daqq al-dhahab,* manufactured thin leaves of gold, one of the many special branches into which goldsmithing was divided.[53] The corresponding Hebrew *zehāvī* was a familiar term in Talmudic Literature. Another branch of this craft was that of the "maker of ornaments," or jeweler, *ḥallā.*[54]

In addition to coppersmiths in general, we find persons specializing in casting or hammering this metal, which was traded either as cast or hammered.[55] Copper was often alloyed with tin (for the manufacture of bronze vessels), wherefore "tinner," trader in, or processor of, tin, is a term and a family name common in the Geniza.[56] Tin dishes and other vessels, so frequent in medieval Poland and other northern European countries, have not been traced thus far in our papers.

Lead was another metallic substance much in use and much traded, and was handled by specialists, whose workshop was called "kitchen," as in other industries requiring processes of heating ("cooking").[57] A by-product of this industry was litharge, an oxide of lead used in the manufacture of glass and other materials, and in medicine for the preparation of a popular eye powder. The preparers of the lead oxide also formed a profession by themselves.[58]

The metal industry was subdivided not only according to the materials and the various treatments required by them, but even more by the type of objects made. For example, bells, in particular the little bells on the necks of beasts of burden, were even more vital in the crowded narrow streets of that period than the horns in our cars today. Therefore, bell-makers, as the Geniza shows, must have been numerous on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, as they were in Milan, Italy, in 1288, when an enthusiastic encomium of that city described the makers of the sweet-sounding brass bells that were attached to the breasts of the horses as one of its marvels.[59] The ubiquitous urban blacksmiths were probably occupied mostly with horseshoes, a commodity as commonplace then as tires are now.[60] Locksmiths are less frequently mentioned, for the locks on doors of houses and rooms were at that time of wood (as they still are in Yemen) and made by carpenters, or rather a particular group, or even groups, of carpenters specializing in this commodity.[61] There were, of course, cutlers, as well as craftsmen concentrating on spoons and ladles (forks were not used in those days), but also on such objects as hooks, razors, and needles.[62] Each of the major copper implements used in the kitchen, such as mortars or canisters (these appear in the trousseaus in sets of six) had its expert manufacturers, the latter even giving a name to a street.[63] Tinkers were numerous. In one document a mender of pots has claims on a Bible codex.[64] The manufacture of arms also was very much specialized, but the Jews represented in the Geniza papers, unlike those in nineteenth century Yemen, do not seem to have participated in this industry.

The manufacture of glass must have been one of the favorite Jewish occupations. This could have been assumed even on the basis of sporadic references in literary sources. It is proved beyond doubt by the testimony of the Geniza records. Various factors might have contributed to this predilection. The Palestine-Lebanese coast between Acre and Tyre had been a center of glass manufacture since remote antiq-

uity and continued as such during the Geniza period.[65] Thus an old tradition was operative in this case; indeed "Jewish glass" was a term familiar in France as early (or should we say: as late?) as the seventh century A.D.[66] The elaborate Jewish dietary and purity laws could be more easily observed with the use of glass vessels.[67] Tentatively, two other reasons might be adduced. Jews were everywhere closely connected with the royal or provincial mints. In these, and in assaying in general, glass weights were used for determining the exact weight of coins and weights, and modern scholars have marveled at the fact that medieval craftsmen had been able to produce glass weights precisely indicating fractions of a gram. Another favorite Jewish occupation, pharmaceuticals, also used glass vessels of different description, size, and color, as we learn again from the Geniza.[68] The most plausible explanation perhaps is this: glassblowing in a hot climate, under the primitive technological conditions of those days, must have been an extremely exacting and uncomfortable occupation. So, why not leave it to the Jews? Here, as in other cases, however, there by no means existed denominational exclusiveness. The house of a Jewish goldsmith in Old Cairo bordered on that of a Christian glassmaker, and Copts are known as manufacturers of glass weights.[69]

Besides Tyre and Beirut, Egypt itself was a great center of the glass industry with an age-old tradition, stemming from Pharaonic times. The excavations of Fustat, carried out by George T. Scanlon in 1964–1965, have brought to light glass manufactured during the early Abbasid period. It seems that it was not Alexandria, as in the Roman period, but Old Cairo that was the main producer, for most of the Geniza material on glass manufacture comes from the latter city. The glass manufactured there was called "local," an epithet that smacks slightly of inferior quality. It may have been referred to also in a letter from Aden, where the writer orders "a wickerwork basket with red glasses from Beirut, and if they cannot be had, white glasses." [70] We also hear of a Byzantine glassmaker traveling from Alexandria to Cairo and "a Jewish glassmaker" delivering in Old Cairo letters "from the West," destined for people in Alexandria, which seems to indicate that he himself had come by land from Tunisia.[71] An eleventh-century Mr. Glaser in Ramle, Palestine, was a dealer in oil. [72] Four contracts of partnership in glass workshops and three fragments referring to employment in this industry have come to light so far (see p. 87, above, and pp. 363, 365, below).

Pottery, albeit sparsely represented in the Geniza, also must have been much specialized, as evident from our records. The *fakhkhār*, *fākhūrī*, or *fākhurānī*, manufactured clay pipes and other clay material used in buildings and installed them himself, wherefore he appears in documents related to the repair of houses. The products of this industry are mentioned also as sent as a gift (fresh earthenware for Passover), or as exports from Rosetta, Egypt, to Sicily.[73] The *qaddār* made pots

and other receptacles, sent, for example, from Tinnīs, Lower Egypt, to Ramle, Palestine.[74] No doubt, here too, each type of vessels was made by a separate group of artisans, although so far only two have been noted: the *kūzī*, maker of narrow-necked water jugs without a spout, and the *ghaḍā'irī*, the manufacturer of porcelain-like translucent dishes.[75] The *mukhfiyāt* pottery, eight pieces of which were sent from Spain to Egypt in 1137 (a year of heavy warfare in the Mediterranean), was a specialty of the Muslim West.[76] But whether *maddār*, "worker in clay," was a technical or a dialectical variant, cannot be made out at present, for it was noted only for Mosul, where the word might have been only a local term for the first or second occupation mentioned at the beginning of this paragraph.[77] The great variety of forms developed by the ceramics industry of that period is reflected in inventories of pharmacies, doctors' dispensaries, and stores, as well as in occasional references with regard to private homes.

*Leather, parchment, and paper.*—In the absence of synthetic fabrics, leather played a far more important role in the period under discussion than it does today. It even seems that it was more widely used than in Greco-Roman times, which may perhaps be explained as a remnant from nomadic Arabia, when hides were more easily available than pottery. Hides, skins, and various types of leather bags served as receptacles for overseas transport, while leather bottles were normally used in daily life for carrying oil, wine, or other fluids, but also for flour. Makers of leather bottles are frequently mentioned in our records, and a street was named after them in Old Cairo.[78] There was hardly a larger consignment of goods going from the West to Egypt which did not include hides or skins. An eleventh-century account from Sicily lists 63 Syracusan oxhides and 76 buckskins and a late letter sent inside Egypt deals with hides of water buffaloes and cattle.[79]

Since transport inside a town or overland was by riding beasts, saddle-making was a great industry.[80] Shoes were perhaps worn less than in our own days, but there was a great variety of them, and people must have been very particular in this respect, since we find orders for shoes from one country to another even for personal use. In one single list, three types of shoemakers are mentioned, and correspondingly various kinds of footwear appear in our records. To be sure, not all of these were made of leather. In Spain, then as today, corkwood was a familiar material.[81]

Hides, in various states of treatment, were found in every household; for the low, movable table on which one dined was put on a hide, in order to protect the carpets from stains and for easy disposal of crumbs and other food remains. Such dining-room hides were often given as presents and most probably were appropriately decorated.

Certain references in Muslim and other medieval sources convey the impression that tanning was an exclusively or predominantly Jewish occupation.[82] This, however, is not borne out by the Geniza records.

Whether in lists of taxpayers, donators, or receivers of alms, in legal documents or private correspondence, tanners appear only sporadically and the family name Tanner is also extremely rare. Similarly, the Muslim handbooks of market supervision clearly indicate that this profession was not exercised primarily by non-Muslims. Dr. Hayyim J. Cohen (see p. 104, above) notes eight early Muslim scholars whose family name was Tanner.

Although the invention of paper restricted the use of parchment and vellum, still they were very much in demand in our period. Torah scrolls and the sacred writings of Muslims and Christians, as far as used in public service, were written on vellum and so were many other religious, scientific, and literary works, as we learn from book lists found in the Geniza, and, of course, from manuscripts that have been preserved. Certain types of deeds, such as marriage contracts and bills of divorce and manumission, and many others also were written on this durable material as were epistles emanating from authorities, especially if they had the character of circular letters. In Tunisia, private letters and accounts were written on parchment well down to the middle of the eleventh century, while in the East the transition to paper must have been made about a hundred years earlier, as the relevant material from the Geniza proves. The reason for this difference was the fact that Tunisia and Sicily were great centers for the manufacture of leather and the export of hides.[83]

In addition to the parchment-maker, the bookbinder was an important representative of the leather industry. As we learn from one letter, leather book covers were sent ready-made from the West to Egypt. Unfortunately, no details are given about these covers except that they were square; since we read that Tunisia exported even gilded shoes, it is likely that the book covers sent to Alexandria were similarly decorated, as indeed are many Islamic book covers. In a book list from the middle of the twelfth century nine covers are red, six are black, and five white (the latter, I understand, being quite unusual).[84]

Paper looms very large in the Geniza records. They tell us, much about the trade in this commodity and its uses, but nothing about its production. Above, page 81, it has been suggested that paper, like sugar, was manufactured in factory-like, larger establishments rather than in small workshops, as was the practice in other industries of that time. Paper was needed in large quantities even in a small provincial town (as we learn from repeated orders issued there) because this was a civilization to which God "had given the pen" (Koran 96:4; Mishna Avoth 5:6). Everyone wrote letters and kept accounts, and even poor people prided themselves in possessing books, which, in addition to their spiritual value, served as a durable investment like jewelry. Moreover, as in our own civilization, paper was used for wrapping and was made into containers.[85]

*The building industry.*—Building operations were normally carried

out by specialists. When we find that in a small town like Hebron, Palestine, all the members of the local community participated in pulling down a synagogue and erecting a new one on a larger site, this was done in order to have it completed as quickly as possible, and the building, according to the dimensions mentioned, must have been of modest size.[86] Mostly, we read in our papers about repairs, and these, as a rule, were effected by experts.

There were stonecutters, but the main building material in Old Cairo was brick, *ṭūb,* from which Spanish and English *adobe* is derived. The master masons were normally assisted by one or more helpers, and sometimes two and more masons worked together. Quite a number of specialists were needed, such as layers of clay pipes and of floor tiles, wall-plasterers, marble-workers (bathrooms in better houses and often also the inner courts were surfaced with marble slabs), makers of ovens and of cesspools, and others whose exact functions have not yet been defined with certainty. Finally, there were the decorators of rooms such as the stucco-workers; when we read that in a poor town like Jerusalem, a decorator received 114 dirhems in wages, we must infer that this type of work constituted a considerable part of the expenditure on the erection or the upkeep of a house. Whether the *muzawwiq,* or painter—a word derived from *za'uq,* mercury—made murals or ornamented buildings otherwise, is not yet evident.[87] The *muhandiz* (with *z,* like its Persian etymology) was not an architect or engineer as in modern Arabic, but a land surveyor, who had to deal with fixing or checking boundaries of lots and houses and estimating the values of houses and amounts of rents.[88]

Carpenters and sawyers are also regularly mentioned in connection with building operations. Modern builders get the lumber needed for a house ready for use from a yard. In the Geniza records we see that the proprietor bought the timber, then first employed sawyers to saw it on the spot according to the dimensions required, and later on a carpenter would fix the beams, staircases, railings, and other parts made of wood. Doors and the like were manufactured in the carpenter's shop, also, it seems, as a specialty work.[89]

Furniture made of wood was used far less in those days than is customary in our civilization. In its manufacture, the carpenters were joined by the turners and the chestmakers, both large professions, which gave their names to a gate and a street, respectively, in Old Cairo. The windows of the houses were covered with grilles of different designs, and as we know from woodwork still extant, the Baroque taste of the period preferred everything carved and turned. Any bride of a better family brought into her new home a *ṣandūq,* or chest, where she kept her wardrobe. This explains the importance of these two occupations.[90] The carpenters specializing in the making of wooden door locks have been referred to above, page 109.

*The preparation of food.*—The higher a civilization, the more it

devolves the preparation of food from the shoulders of the housewife to specialized industries. In a primitive economy, as in most parts of Yemen, South Arabia, women get up long before sunrise for the toilsome work of grinding the stone mill and baking bread, and in many houses bread is baked for each meal anew, for their menfolk like to eat it warm and fresh, as it comes from the oven. We normally buy our bread and cakes ready-made in the store.

The civilization represented in the Geniza records ranks somewhere between these two extremes, but is decidedly nearer our own. Each house would lay in stores of wheat, but the women were not expected to do the grinding. This was done by millers found all over the city.[91] When a husband went overseas on extended travels, he would assign to his wife fixed quantities of wheat and money for grinding it.[92] One could also buy flour (of different grades of fineness) in stores specializing in this commodity.[93] The baking would be done by a baker, and many would simply buy loaves of bread, which, for easier computation, normally had the weight of one pound.[94]

Cakes, called *ka'k* in Arabic (a word that seems, however, not to be connected with its English equivalent), also were normally bought in the bazaar, and the name or designation *ka'kī,* or cake master, is rather frequent.[95] Here is an order to a cake master, carefully written on a tiny piece of paper: "To the elder Abī Sa'd—may God preserve him. Please receive two pennies as earnest money and give the bearer a pound of well done ringlets [probably a type of doughnut], and if you make cakes tomorrow, prepare two pounds of little cakes of utmost smallness for me." [96] The pastrycook, *khamīrī,* was another familiar figure.[97]

A fourteenth-century Muslim scholar describes how Jewish cake makers used to squirt sesame oil on the cakes from their mouth and warns true believers not to defile themselves by a liquid that had been in the mouth of an infidel. The student of Karaite literature is reminded of a passage in a famous epistle directed by a leader of this queer sect against the majority of the Jews, the Rabbanites: "How can I keep silent when many of them eat meat from carcasses skinned by Gentiles? The Gentiles fill their mouth with water, then sprinkle it over the flesh of the carcass which they are skinning so that their saliva is blown between the flesh and the hide." Such warnings, although inspired by the religious rigorism of the Middle Ages, were certainly conducive to hygiene.[98]

Canned and frozen foods (as differentiated from preserves, which were common even in antiquity) are modern inventions. The medieval society represented in the Geniza papers had an equivalent for these means of alleviating a housewife's life, an equivalent indeed, which is only sparely used by us. Many dishes were prepared by specialist cooks in the bazaar, from where they were brought home and served fresh. Respectable people did not dine out in those days. Workmen, in whose

wages lunch was often included, probably had to do so. But for a member of the middle class it was a disgrace to take his meal at the shop of the *harrās*, the preparer of the *harīsa*, the medieval hamburger (ground meat and wheat fried in much fat).[99] This, as well as the food prepared by the maker of *jashīsh* (groats cooked together with meat and dates), or by the "roaster," *shawwā'*, the "dinner cook," *'ashshī*, or the "meat cook," *ṭabbākh*, in general, were rather taken home, and so were the various cold dishes, such as relishes made by the *bawāridī*, vinegar sauce and other appetizers prepared by the *kāmukhī*, or flavored waters sold by the *muṭarrī*.[100] All a smart housewife had to do was to tell her husband in the morning what to bring home for dinner in the evening.

The Geniza records distinguish among butcher, meat-seller, meat-carver, and slaughterer, from whom the slaughterer of goats is again differentiated—a specialization brought into relief by the repeated warnings of a handbook of market supervision not to mix beef or mutton with the meat of goats.[101] Sausages, called in Jewish Aramaic and in Arabic *naqāniq*, which is Semitized Latin Lucanica, that is, coming from Lucania in southern Italy, are mentioned in the Talmud and in Muslim literature, but not in the Geniza. The sausage-makers also formed a separate group.[102]

There were so many types of sweetmeats that even a very elaborate handbook on market supervision had difficulty in encompassing all the specialists handling them and the techniques required in their preparation.[103] The *zalabānī*, the preparer of a pancake made of unleavened dough, honey, almonds, and other ingredients, was particularly popular and we have found even a scholar engaged in this occupation.[104] Another popular sweetmeat, the *qaṭā'if*, was likewise made of flour and almonds.[105] The *lawwāzīn*, men processing or selling almonds, appear frequently in the Geniza, and a street in Old Cairo was named after them.[106] The "fryer," *qālī*, it seems, prepared the various fried seeds that people used to nibble.[107]

The secret of artificial ice was not yet known in those days. Ice and snow were imported from the mountains of Palestine and Syria into Egypt and kept in subterranean receptacles for the hot summer days, when they were sold at extravagant prices. Thus, the *thallāj*, or "ice man," was a merchant with much capital, not a manufacturer.[108]

The industries connected with oil, wine, honey, sugar, dairy farming, and fisheries are treated separately and the same applies to the very much ramified transport business.[109]

*Government control of industry.*—The Fatimid government, as we have seen, operated large workshops, especially for the manufacture of textiles required for the imperial wardrobe and for the distribution of robes of honor. The mint and arsenals for the needs of army and navy were other state establishments. Moreover, government taxed practically every industrial activity, which gave it also excellent

opportunity to supervise each individual workshop. Maqrīzī, the great antiquarian, has preserved a list of the revenue from this tax from the end of the Fatimid period.[110] The estimates of income from each industry were fixed, since the taxes were farmed out (see above, p. 73), usually for several years. The tax on silkwork and silk-dyeing in Fustat brought 334 dinars per year. By chance, a Geniza document from 1147 gives the amount of the same revenue from al-Maḥalla as 335 dinars, which is not surprising. The Maimonides responsum discussed above, page 88, shows that the Jewish silk-workers of al-Maḥalla were at least as strong as those of Fustat.[111] (With today's Egyptian revival al-Maḥalla is again a great industrial center.) From another Geniza document we learn that the taxes on silkwork were specified according to its various stages, which were undertaken by different craftsmen. The tax referred to was paid for "the untangling and unraveling of silk."[112] The finished products were stamped with the seal of the tax collector.[113] Fabrics woven or dyed in private homes (which was prohibited), or which were otherwise manufactured under evasion of the tax due, could be immediately recognized by the absence of the stamp and were therefore traded only to acquaintances, who, however, did not always keep the secret. Such an occurrence is reported in a court record from Malīj, written around 1100.[114] In another provincial town, and approximately at the same time, a sum of 13 dirhems was paid for "the refining of the sugar [the quantity was known to the addressee of the letter] and the tax on it."[115] The amounts of the revenue even from industries of considerable dimensions in Fustat were modest, 350 dinars from the spinning workshops, 236 from the potters, 240 from the manufacturers of the popular Ṭabaristān upholstery. No complaints about these taxes have been found in letters and no references to them in contracts (except one from late Mamluk times). Thus, they can hardly have been of great economic import. The subject of government control is discussed in greater detail in the concluding section of the chapter on commerce.

## 5. AGRICULTURE AND FISHERY

The Mediterranean area of the High Middle Ages was characterized by its highly mercantile economy. Still, whoever could afford it possessed land and looked after its yields, whether this was a Muslim judge in Ghaza, Palestine, or the scribe of a Jewish court in Old Cairo. From a query submitted to Maimonides it is evident that it was common practice for Jews to entrust their fields, vineyards, orchards and gardens to Gentile sharecroppers.[1] Despite the glamour of the capital, many preferred to live in little towns or in villages. This fact has already been stressed above, page 54, in connection with the amazing number of foreigners settling in the Egyptian Rīf, or country-

side. Here it must be added that at least some of these were connected with agriculture. The son of an immigrant from Baghdad, whose father had been active in Old Cairo for many years, settled in a village near Minyat Ziftā, a little town in the Nile delta, and was entirely occupied there with farm products, while a newcomer from Palestine, living in the capital, possessed fields in another location attended to by his cousin, also a Palestinian.[2] The richer people invested a considerable part of their income in farming. A will of a notable divides his landed property, his flocks of sheep, and all the orchards possessed or leased by him between his brother and his children, which indicates that these agricultural possessions and rights had been inherited from the father of the testator.[3] A settlement between partners in precious stones reveals that they also shared farming land in common; one partner receives 120-½ dinars in cash and the other all the flax and other crops, which proves that the land possessed by them must have been of very considerable extent.[4] The amirs, or generals, were of course the great landowners. From a plot belonging to a Jewish pious foundation an amir got his regular dues.[5] As we shall see, the nagids of the Jewish community, rivaled the amirs in this matter.

From Muslim handbooks of administration we learn that in our period even the highest officials were paid partly in cash and partly in kind, particularly in wheat and barley. We also read in a Geniza letter that a newly appointed local *mushārif,* or superintendent of revenue, received an annual *'awn,* or salary, of 180 dinars and 100 irdabb (about 9,000 liters) of grain. Even of bribes—or to quote the original: "Presents brought to so-and-so [a high-ranking personality] so that he may speak to the Qadi," or Muslim judge—we read that they were given in the convenient form of cash—20 dinars—accompanied by an unspecified quantity of grain.[6] The Jewish community officials were remunerated in a similar way. Payments by the more affluent members of the community for the distribution of loaves to the needy were also made in wheat.[7] Furthermore, grain was given on loan "like dinars," as we know not only from Jewish and Muslim lawbooks, but from Geniza letters, for example, from eleventh-century Jerusalem.[8] All this shows that people tried to be as close as possible to "the source of life"—bread was called "life," *'aysh,* in the local vernacular of Egypt even in the eleventh century.[9]

A village was designated by the same word, *ḍay'a,* as a farm, which was natural, for often a whole village belonged to a single lord. The Mediterranean village, as far as we are able to know through the Geniza papers, was entirely different from the middle and western European manor, where its lord had complete economic control and outrageous prerogatives, in addition to his political authority and far-reaching juridical power. The ḍay'a was similar to the European manor insofar as its peasants were in many respects the heirs of the Roman *coloni,* that is, legally free men, who were enslaved to the soil that they worked

and to its proprietor. But south and east of the Mediterranean the state remained in control in all respects, economic, political, and juridical, the lord being the beneficiary rather than the master of the village. In a letter written in Arabic characters, presumably by a Muslim, the writer described the bearer as "one of the fellahin of my brother," referring to the still-existent village of Kalbashā. This phrase should not be understood as implying that the messenger stood in a state of servitude to the man who had leased the place from the government or received it as a fief.[10]

The village, like the town, formed a rather open society. Jewish immigrants from Spain could settle in a ḍay'a near Jerusalem in the middle of the eleventh century and operate a store there.[11] At approximately the same time, lac, an Oriental varnish used in industry, but not in agriculture, could be sold in four different villages in Egypt.[12] A ḍay'a might be large enough to have its own *nā'ib*, or Muslim deputy judge, or deputy police superintendent.[13] From one of those four Egyptian villages, a beautiful Aramaic document, dated 1083, has been preserved, the writer of which must have been a scholarly man.[14] To another of those villages a Hebrew letter was addressed from Jerusalem around 1040, the understanding of which likewise required an expert knowledge in a language not normally used in daily conversation.[15]

Letters from the countryside would deal with the universal topics of the state of crops or, in a country like Palestine, of the rain, the prices and diseases of cattle, consignments and presents sent to town. In Egypt they would write in particular about wheat, flax and chickens, but also about many minor agricultural products.[16] We hear about an act of robbery committed "near our village" (in the Fayyūm), or read complaints about an oppressive tax-farmer who had sold the petitioner's fruit trees and had already earmarked some of his date palms, or in another case, a most lively dispute between an angry proprietor and a manager quick at repartee, defending himself against the reproach of negligence, for instance, with regard to rapacious Bedouins. A manager of a farm far away from the capital would remind the absentee landlord to replenish his stock of bees, and, naturally, many orders and queries about prices went from the countryside to the town, and vice versa.[17] The contrast between town and country would find its expression in popular stories about the Miṣrī, or citizen of the capital, and the Rīfī, preserved in the Geniza, or a man would write in a letter: "I feel myself in relation to you like a fellah honored by a most illustrious lord of a ḍay'a," enlarging upon the topic in detail.[18] The term Rīf for countryside and smaller towns as opposed to the capital and other cities was also used in Palestine.[19]

Wheat was the main grain for human consumption. Its cultivation, prices, and ways of preparation are discussed in *Mediterranean Society*, Volume III, chapter viii. Barley served as bread for the very poor, but was normally needed to feed riding beasts (and probably also

for various kinds of beer mentioned in our records; the *mizr* beer, according to Maqrīzī, was made from wheat). As we may conclude from the quantities ordered by a scholar from a village, it was laid in in stores like wheat.[20] In Palestine it is referred to as grown in the district of Ghaza, a region known also in this century for the quality of its barley.[21]

The cultivation and use of rice in the medieval Near East has recently formed the subject of an excellent study.[22] Therefore, it is perhaps appropriate to list here some details about the subject gleaned from the Geniza records. We find a consignment of rice going to Palermo in Sicily where it arrived, and one to Sūsa in Tunisia where it was destroyed by enemy action—unfortunately it is not stated whether it was sent from Egypt or the Syro-Palestinian coast.[23] From Tripoli, Lebanon, a small quantity, obviously destined for home consumption and not for trade, went to Alexandria in times of scarcity.[24] In 1045–1046, a Tunisian merchant on his way to Old Cairo bought rice in Abū Ṣir at a price of 18 dirhems, for which he had to pay 2 dirhems toll when he entered the capital. This is an indication of the cultivation of this cereal in the Nile Delta over two hundred years before it is attested in literary sources.[25] In Old Cairo itself there existed a "House of Rice," that is, a storehouse and bourse for the sale of rice, which was situated in the neighborhood of buildings belonging to a Muslim judge, a Christian innkeeper, and two Jewish ladies near the great thoroughfare of the bazaar of the oil-makers.[26] So far, however, not a single *razzāz*, or rice merchant, has been found in the Geniza, while H. J. Cohen's Ph.D. dissertation mentioned above enumerates twenty of them, mainly for Irāq, as against only thirteen *ḥannāṭ*'s or dealers in wheat.

Since biblical times, Egypt has been famous for its vegetables and greens, and the Jews for their predilection for this type of food. (For ancient Fez, R. Le Tourneau quotes the curious note that the Jewish infatuation for vegetables was a sufficient reason for the Muslims not to like them.) In the Geniza period too, vegetables formed a conspicuous part of the daily diet, and different types of greengrocers and vegetable sellers are mentioned repeatedly in our documents. The Geniza has also preserved a document in Arabic characters from July, 1103, in which two Christians in Alexandria lease from a Muslim two-thirds of his *mabqala*, or vegetable garden, for the duration of a year. The garden was situated at the outskirts of the city and was bordered by two vineyards, an irrigation channel, and the Khalīj, the great canal that connected the Mediterranean port with the Nile. The two Christians promised to use the site only for the growing of vegetables and greens and to pay a yearly rent of 6 dinars. They were permitted the use of a well, a wooden irrigation wheel, and a shack (proudly called *qaṣr*, castle; the English word has the same Latin origin as the Arabic term, which appears in the sense of a primitive farm building also in papyri

from earlier centuries). This document is of considerable interest inasmuch as it shows that an agricultural contract was made on the same lines as those known for industry and commerce. The lease is for a short period, one year, although one would expect that the needs of preservation and amelioration of the soil were conducive to longer contracts. Payment was made not at the beginning, but after the lapse of a certain period, as was the general usage in contracts of rent.[27]

As a rule, vegetables appear in the Geniza at the consumer's end rather than at the producer's and are therefore treated under Food in *Mediterranean Society,* Volume IV, chapter ix. The same applies to plants used for seasoning and as spices. The industrial crops, in particular flax and silk, have been dealt with in the preceding section.

Next to wheat, the nutrition of the common people depended mainly on oil, obtained either from plants or from the olive tree. As oil, together with wax, was also the almost exclusive material for artificial lighting, its importance can be easily gauged. Because of the enormous extent of flax-growing, linseed oil was widely used, in particular for lighting. It was exported from Egypt to olive-growing Syria and to faraway Aden in South Arabia.[28] Edible oil was won to a large extent from the sesame plant, which was grown in the Nile Delta, in particular its northern parts, and in Palestine. "Maker of sesame oil" as a name or an occupation occurs frequently in the Geniza records, while "sesamist," dealer in this crop, is rare.[29] The dyeing plant safflower (the English word is derived from Arabic *'aṣfur,* which designates its flowers) or rather its seed (called *qurṭum,* cf. the scientific name *carthamus*) also provides an oil, used mainly for medical purposes. In the Geniza, we find the seed sent from a village to the capital, while the red dye made from the flowers, which was used widely in cosmetics, was a common article in the international trade of coloring stuffs.[30]

The noble olive tree, in the Bible (Judges 9:8) regarded as the king of all trees, is indigenous to the Mediterranean area, but almost entirely absent from Egypt. Olive oil, however, was a vital ingredient in the daily food of the population and also provided the choicest lighting. No wonder, then, that its import to Egypt was one of the great branches of the Mediterranean trade. Still, it was partly processed also in the country. In a document made out in Tunisia in 1074, a woman claimed "[olive] oil makers' equipment" in Old Cairo which belonged to her, and in 1203, a man called *baddī,* operator or proprietor of an oil press, appears as a party to a contract in the same town.[31] *Zayyāt,* maker or seller of olive oil, is one of the most common names or occupations mentioned in our papers, and repeated reference has been made here to a bazaar named after that profession. In an olive-growing country like Spain, it was of course natural that the lending of an object like a stone used in the oil press should form the object of a contract (Lucena, before 1021).[32]

In Egypt, by far the most important local fruit was the date, and we

have already seen the writer of a Geniza letter expressing concern about the fate of his date palms.[33] Occasionally we also hear about wholesale trade in dates. Today, about thirty different sorts are on the market in Egypt. In a Geniza paper of 1143, one sort bore the name *Ya'qūb* (Jacob).[34] Fig trees also must have been very common in Egypt, although in the Geniza we read rather frequently about the import of figs from Lebanon, Syria, and Tunisia. One particularly esteemed fig was called *fāriq;* but a Mr. Fāriqī, whose name was derived from this word, was the proprietor of a ship.[35]

The sycamore (not to be confounded with the European and American trees of that name), at home in Egypt since time immemorial and once believed to be the seat of Hathor, the goddess of love, was grown not only for its figlike fruit, but also for its timber, although both are of inferior quality.[36] Carobs, or "St. John's bread," were, as in St. John's times, food for the poor, but in periods of famine, an avidly sought-after substitute for more valuable carbohydrates. As we find them sold in considerable, but not commercial, quantities to a merchant passing through Alexandria, the dry, sweetish carobs, which remain edible for many months, was perhaps an important part of the diet of seafarers.[37]

Bananas became popular in Europe and in the United States only during this century. The markets of Jerusalem and Old Cairo were, however, full of them more than nine hundred years ago, and the designations banana grower and banana vendor recur in our records both as an occupation and as a family name. Melons, of course, were grown everywhere around the Mediterranean. In towns, they may have not been so easily obtainable. In one letter, an aunt, in order to make her invitation to her village more attractive for her little nephew, promises him that he would have plenty of watermelons to eat.[38]

Most impressive are the many references in the Geniza to the import to Egypt of nuts and fruits, such as almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, pistachios, peaches, and prunes.[39] Perhaps the great influx of immigrants from Palestine, Syria, and Iran, where these fruits grow, had something to do with this development in taste and eating habits. The sellers of dried fruit had a bazaar of their own in Old Cairo, and persons described as such are mentioned in our papers.[40] An "apple man" has so far made his appearance only in Palestine, a country renowned for its apples all over the Near East before it was laid waste.[41]

The growing of citrus fruit, in our days one of the most lucrative branches of Mediterranean agriculture, was of very limited scope in the period considered here. Lemon juice was traded in considerable quantities.[42] Otherwise, we read in the Geniza papers only of the *citrus medica, utrujj* in Arabic, *etrōg* in Hebrew, as its scientific name indicates, used in medicine, but also made into delicious preserves.[43] The technique of grafting of different species of citrus was already prac-

tised in that time, as is known, for example, from the writings of Ibn Jumay', a Jewish doctor contemporary with Maimonides.[44]

The *bustāns*, or orchards, sometimes comprised not only fruit trees, but also trees of shade, planted for the pleasure of the visitors. In a document from Damascus, an orchard in a nearby village, which was made a pious foundation for the benefit of the local scholars, contained, besides fruit trees, such as pomegranates, Greek, or black, and Persian, or white, poplars, cypresses, and willows.[45] One-half of "a house in an orchard" was let in Old Cairo for 25 dirhems a month on condition that the tenant took care of the irrigation, for which he was allowed to make a monthly deduction of 5 dirhems. The proprietor himself continued to live in the house, as his father had done before him. Thus, it is likely that the orchard contained decorative in addition to fruit-bearing trees.[46] When we read that in Sicily a man bought from a Christian "gardens and a house" for one hundred mithqāls, the agricultural land was perhaps the main object of the transaction.[47]

We have just had an example of an orchard donated to the community as a pious foundation. This must have been a rather common practice, as several legal deeds connected with it have been preserved. In one case, such a bustān is leased for the duration of eight years against a payment of 11 dinars and the obligation to deliver every year one thousand palm branches and to transport them to the Nile. (These branches perhaps were destined for use on the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, cf. the Christian Palm Sunday.) Moreover, the tenant undertook to operate the irrigation wheel continuously (i.e., whenever needed) with oxen and to cut nothing planted in the orchard except when this would be conducive to its health.[48] In another deed, a piece of land that comprised a well with perennial water, but was in a neglected state, was leased for the nominal price of 6 dirhems a year for a period of thirty years, on condition that the leaseholder or his heirs revived the land and installed an irrigation wheel.[49] "The orchard of the synagogue of the Palestinians" in Old Cairo most probably was a piece of land adjoining the building itself, as still was the case in the 1880's. This was not leased out, but the fruits were sold yearly in one lump, in 1161–1162 for 12 dinars. An autograph instruction by Maimonides concerning a communal orchard which was leased to a Muslim does not refer to this bustān, but to a piece of ground outside the city. Jewish persons called *bustānī*, gardener, are mentioned in the Geniza. One, who received clothing from the community, perhaps worked in a communal orchard.[50]

As is well known, Muslims are not supposed to drink wine or any other alcoholic beverage. In our period, however, a certain laxity prevailed. A contemporaneous Muslim visitor to the Egyptian capital remarked that hardly any fresh grapes could be had there, because most of the grapes available in the countryside were made into wine. Unlike the more strict Muslim West, in Egypt vessels containing wine

were openly displayed for sale.[51] This report tallies with the evidence to be gained from the Geniza papers. The huge sales of wine referred to could hardly have been destined for the Christian and Jewish population alone, especially as many people, and certainly not only Jews, used to buy grapes and have them pressed and made into wine for home consumption (see below).

Unlike orchards, vineyards, as fields—in one document, wine-growing areas are indeed designated as "fields"—were legally the property of the government or its amirs. Therefore, a *karrām,* or "wine-grower," is not to be regarded as a proprietor of vineyards, but as one who leased them from the government and took care of them. Of cases like this we read in our papers, for example, about an exquisite vineyard belonging to, or being under the jurisdiction of, the governor of Alexandria, which the writer of the letter had for years tried in vain to lease. For this purpose a letter of recommendation had been sent to the governor from influential people in the capital.[52] In Spain, the legal situation was different. The Hebrew documents or formularies that have reached the Geniza from there show that private persons possessed vineyards and sold or leased them at liberty. Of particular interest is one deed of sale of half a vineyard, which, after having detailed all the legal aspects of the transaction in most elaborate Hebrew, enumerates in Arabic, "in the terminology in vogue in Muslim courts," no fewer than fifteen defects and diseases that the vineyard might have and in which the buyer was prepared to acquiesce.[53] Another document from Spain, a formulary, shows how minutely the obligations of a tenant were fixed, including the exact number of loads of manure to be used; he had to look after everything, from the amelioration of the soil and of the stock of the vines to the pressing of the grapes.[54]

Since wine has in Jewish religion a strongly sacramental character, its preparation had to be done by Jews.[55] Therefore it is not surprising to find persons designated as "pressers (of grapes)," although this can have been only a seasonal occupation.[56] Pressers of grapes were needed in general, as were millers. For just as people bought wheat and sent it to the miller for grinding (instead of buying flour), thus they bought grapes and had them pressed (instead of buying wine). "In case I shall be late and not be able to come home in time," writes a government official to his family in Old Cairo, "please buy the grapes and have them pressed. By God, the purchase of the grapes and the wheat is my most urgent request of you." Such inquiries about the pressing of wine or reports that the wine has been made and "put into the sun" are quite common in letters written in the months of August and September. Smaller quantities might have been pressed at home. Thus, a scholar asks a friend in a village to send him two pliable, handleless baskets for pressing grapes. Handpressing of grapes (in linen cloth) was done in Palestine even in this century.[57] In addition to homemade wine, one

bought the much-consumed beverage at the expert wineseller and, as we do, also imported wine from Europe.

In view of the prominence in the Geniza of the production of wine, one is astonished to find in it no mention of that of vinegar, especially as vinegar was used very much in the preparation of food and beverages. A *khallāl*, or vinegar-maker, sold flax and was a Muslim. One half of the "Vinegar House" in Fustat (not mentioned by the Muslim geographers) was the property of the Jewish community.[58]

As for stock farming, we have to bear in mind that, owing to the difficulties of transport and preservation, a certain number of cattle had to be kept inside a large city in order to provide it with fresh milk. We repeatedly find reference in our documents to *zarība's*, or enclosures for domestic animals, for example, in the Tujīb quarter of Old Cairo.[59] Whether the frequently mentioned "milkmen" tended these animals, or were solely occupied with the marketing of milk, is not evident from our papers.[60] Since the decalogue prescribes that not only man, but domestic animals as well, should do no work on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:10), and, as in our period such commandments were taken very literally, Jews had great difficulties with their cattle-breeding. One man, we read, defends himself against the insinuation that he hired out his oxen on Saturday to Muslims to draw their irrigation wheels. Another describes how he gave to his sheep beans before sending them out for grazing so that they should not graze on the Sabbath in the same way as they did on workdays. Delivering fresh milk on Saturday, of course, was out of the question, as no profit was allowed on Sabbath; however, even its keeping for cheese-making met with religious scruples.[61] In order to avoid these difficulties, one shared one's cattle with Muslims, in a form of partnership in which one partner was the proprietor and the other did the work, a common form of capital investment in those times.[62] A pair of oxen cost in the middle of the tenth century 15 "large" dinars, a high sum, for which one could have a modest house in a town. The price is not described as exorbitant.[63]

Cheese-making looms very large in the Geniza records. A district near Damietta, in Lower Egypt, which according to one Muslim geographer had the best sheep in the world, was also a great center of this industry, and others are also mentioned.[64] Nevertheless, the local production was not sufficient and we read much about imports from Sicily, Crete, and Asia Minor (see above, p. 46), as well as from Palestine.[65] For the preparation of cheese, rennets, the membrane of the stomach of a calf, were used, and special sorts of cheese are mentioned.[66] Butter, *zubda*, was another dairy product in common use (a creamy substance, different from ours) and its producers formed a special group, which, however, was not as prominent as the cheese-makers.[67]

A middle-class weekend without chicken was unthinkable. Therefore it is not surprising to find that *dajājī*, seller of chickens, occurs fre-

quently in the Geniza papers, both as occupation and family name.[68] There were also special poultry farmers. A *qunn*, or coop with chicken, or several coops, would be sent to friends in the city. A scholar living in a small town would keep a poultry yard. Of course, we hear about this only because a number of his chickens perished in a disease.[69]

The demand for honey and wax was many times greater in the Middle Ages than in our own time. Consequently, the trade in these two commodities and beekeeping itself are very conspicuous in the Geniza papers. It is also possible, but by no means sure, that in this field the Jews had a proportionally higher share than the rest of the population because Palestine was a country with a long tradition of beekeeping and, in this period, still exported honey and wax.[70] In addition to the beekeeper, there were specialists in scraping the honey from the combs and in particular "the honey men," most probably occupied mainly with the selling of the product.[71] Some Geniza documents deal especially with beekeeping. At the death of an apiarist, three hundred "undamaged" beehives and one thousand pounds of honey were found in his possession.[72] From another letter we learn that exhausted swarms of bees had to be either disposed of, or replenished by the end of January, and that fifty beehives, to be purchased for this purpose, cost the considerable sum of 20 dinars.[73] Just as the Egyptian Nagid, according to the letter mentioned, possessed an apiary in a place far away from the capital, thus we find, four hundred and fifty years later, a prominent scholar in Safad, Palestine, keeping bees in Galilean villages and transporting his honey from there to the provincial capital.[74] A "honey" of inferior quality was extracted from the sugar cane, and the readers of *The Arabian Nights* (Night no. 990) are familiar with the tragicomedy of the cobbler whose marriage fell to pieces because he brought home sugarcane honey, instead of bee honey; in a Geniza letter to Damietta an order is given for honey, "but solely from bees."[75]

Egypt produced its own honey, and one of the major provincial towns was called, also in a Geniza document, dated 1244, "Honey [-producing] Benhā." From another town, we read, "two pots with honeycombs" were sent to the capital.[76] There was also a very considerable import of honey, not only from Palestine, but also from Tunisia, and wax was one of the staple goods coming from that country. Wax-maker, *shammā'*, was one of the most common Jewish family names.[77]

Along the same routes upon which honey and wax went from the Muslim West and the Syro-Palestinian coast through Alexandria or Damietta to the Egyptian capital, Old Cairene sugar was shipped in regular and very large consignments in the opposite direction. From Muslim descriptions of Old Cairo it was already evident that sugar production must have been one of the major, if not the greatest, industry in that town during the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods, and

from the same sources it appears also that the share of the Jews in this field was very extensive.[78] *Sukkarī*, or maker (and seller) of sugar, is indeed one of the most common occupations and family names occurring in the Geniza, from the beginning of the eleventh to the end of the thirteenth centuries. Nor was this confined to Old Cairo. A representative of the merchants in Qayrawān, Tunisia, was called Ibn al-Sukkarī around 1030, and a scholar from Denia, Spain, who went to Baghdad around 1070 and became the head of the Jewish Academy there, bore the same family name.[79] We read about a "sugar kitchen" in Minyat Ziftā in the eastern Nile Delta, which was leased for 8 dinars during two years and brought a profit of 45 dinars per year.[80] The *qandiyya*, or producers of candy sugar, were a group by themselves, referred to several times.[81]

The sums just mentioned are of course modest. But we have already seen, page 81, above, that in the contracts for industrial partnership by far the biggest capital was invested in sugar factories. In a deathbed declaration a man leaves instructions for the payment of the very large debt of 238 dinars out of the sale of his sugar which was stored with his partner, leaving the rest to his son.[82] Mostly, the sugar fabricants appear in the list of contributors as the wealthier members of the community. "Juice of the sugarcane" was the byname of a person who obviously was very sweet and pleasant and it also became a family name. No references to the cultivation of the sugarcane have come to light so far in our records,[83] while the references to sugar made of raisins are doubtful.

"We remember the fish which we were wont to eat in Egypt." Whether this biblical testimony (Numbers 11:5) is indicative of the abundance and excellence of fish in the Nile country or only of the predilection of the ancient Israelites for that food, in any case, both the abundance of and the predilection for fish were still to be encountered during the Geniza period. A Spanish visitor to Cairo at the time reports that fish pickles were one of the most common victuals consumed, and as far as the poorer sections of the population are concerned, a similar observation was made early in the nineteenth century.[84] In Geniza letters we find a glass jar with minced fish pickles going from Alexandria to Old Cairo and salted tuna fish sent as a present to the same town from faraway Qayrawān.[85] Fishers and fishmongers, also as family names, are well attested in our papers, and there were specialists, for example, in tuna fish, called *tunnī* and *tawwān* (both the English and Arab names come from the Greek), in carp pickles, in various other fishes, especially the popular little salt fishes, and in oysters or shellfish, *maḥ(ḥ)ārī*.[86] Since the maḥārī had their base in Alexandria and operated on the Syro-Palestinian coast, they were most probably engaged in the catching of the precious purple shellfish. Together with dyers they belonged to the lowest strata of the society and gave much trouble to the community leaders in Alexandria. One letter speaks with horror

about Alexandrian shellfishers drinking beer in Crusaders' taverns in Acre, Palestine. Across the bay of Acre there is Haifa, the Greek byname of which was still, at the time of the writing of that letter, Porphyrion, the town of the purple shell.[87]

## 6. PROFESSIONS OF WOMEN

The women were the workers par excellence. Each married woman was expected to engage in some work in addition to her household chores. Therefore, the marriage contracts often stated, whether a wife's earnings belonged to her husband (who was under the obligation to provide her with all her needs) or whether she would be allowed to retain them, or whether they were to cover her clothing expenses.[1] When a husband went abroad, he would earmark or deposit sums for his wife, from which she would pay rent, taxes, and her household expenditure, but would stipulate expressly not to lay claim on any earnings made by her "through work and spinning."[2] We also read complaints about a husband illegally appropriating sums received by his wife for her work.[3] A keen observer of life in Egypt at the beginning of the nineteenth century remarked that even upper-class women did by no means refrain from sending the products of their needle artistry to the market for sale.[4] A similar situation must have prevailed in our period (cf. p. 129, below). In this chapter, however, only special professions exercised by women are considered.

In the first place, there were the professions connected with female life itself. A wedding was a great affair, and the elaborate combing and dressing of the bride was confided to an expert, the bride-comber, who also was obviously in charge at least of a part of the receptions, as she had to employ a laborer for her work. A witty Yemenite proverb points to the fact that the bride-comber was the most important person at a wedding: "As long as the bride-comber has eaten her fill, the rest of the party may remain hungry." It is interesting that in some places, but not everywhere, Muslim bride-combers were employed in Jewish houses.[5] In childbirth, the young mothers were helped by experienced women of her own family, but also by professional midwives.[6] Wet nurses are rarely mentioned in the Geniza records. It may be noted in passing that the oldest Muslim collection of legal opinions contains the question whether a Muslim household employing a Jewish wet nurse might have its meat prepared by a Jewish ritual slaughterer in order to enable her to eat together with the family without religious scruples. A similar collection from the thirteenth century reports the case of a Jewish woman who nursed a Muslim boy and died leaving a child of her own. It was impossible to establish which was the Jewish boy and which the Muslim.[7]

Women doctors appear more frequently in our documents. One fe-

male oculist is also listed. As those mentioned belonged to the lower strata of the society, they certainly had not gone through the expensive apprenticeship of scientific medicine, but were practitioners whose knowledge and skill had come to them by tradition. I, who have had opportunity to admire the quick judgment and the dexterity displayed by such a woman doctor in a Yemenite weavers' village, as well as the trust put in her by her clients, am inclined to believe that those *ṭabības* (one is called *al-ṭubayba,* "the little [or beloved] doctor") fulfilled an important role in the female society of the Geniza period. A specialist for the removal of hair from the bodies of ladies is also mentioned.[8]

Women teachers are frequently referred to. It stands to reason that they taught little girls the female art of embroidery and other needlework, and in one case it is expressly said that the widow of a scholar was assigned two orphans to teach them "the craft" of embroidery while another person, presumably a male, would instruct them in prayer. There are also cases of women working in schools and giving regular instruction in the main subject studied there, namely Bible reading. We may be right in assuming that these were exceptions rather than the rule.[9] That women should engage in astrology and prophesying the future of their clients could be expected in an age when such activities were regarded as an ordinary occupation.[10]

The industries, in particular textiles, were, of course, the main field of female remunerative occupations. From the Geniza texts it is not evident whether there existed workshops employing groups of women, or whether all work was done individually and at home. When a husband makes peace with his wife on condition she works at home and not out of the house, or when a Persian merchant writes that the (female) spinners did not produce much of a certain material any more, such statements could refer either to workshops or to private homes. We read about a woman unraveling the filament and reeling raw silk given to her, which was burnt in her house; another, a divorcee, whose whole livelihood consisted in this type of work; about a woman leaving equipment for silk-weaving to her daughter; or one ordering silk to be woven by herself and her sister; or about a community statute forbidding women to dye silk at home, except with the permission of the person who had farmed out the government tax for the exercise of this craft.[11] Spinning was by no means confined to the treatment of local fibers. In addition to silk, of which we have just read, we hear about Egyptian flax, sent in raw state to Tunisia and spun there by women living on this work.[12]

It is not astonishing that we rarely hear of dressmakers. In those days, it was the fibers and colors and only secondarily the cut which counted; most dresses were simple in form and probably sewn largely at home. One embroiderer was rich enough to donate a Torah scroll to a synagogue, another, a Muslim, for buying a house worth 400 dinars. "Son of the lace-maker" was a family name.[13]

The products of female industry were sold by female brokers. While in Pharaonic times, as Herodotus reports with amazement, women in Egypt did the selling and buying (while the men were the producers), the medieval bazaars were normally no place for women's activities. For this very reason, it was practicable to have a female broker who visited the houses and collected and traded the threads and textiles made by women (see p. 161, below). Women designated as *wakīla,* or agent, are mentioned in communal lists and referred to in letters (not always in a laudatory context).[14] Others were named after the commodity in which they traded such as the sellers of ambergris perfumes, or of flour.[15] In one case we read about a man who had inherited from his father two Hebrew Bible codexes and entrusted a woman broker with their sale. She offered them "to all the elders of the community" and when she found no buyer, she fell upon the good idea of selling them to her own son for 7-½ dinars, while she herself collected a brokerage fee in the amount of ⅓ dinar. Six years later, the original proprietor learned that one codex alone allegedly was worth 20 dinars. The case was brought to court—and thus to our knowledge.[16]

In the preparation of food for sale, women were represented less than one would expect. We hear of a woman baker, a seller of cooked beans, and the preparer of a certain sweetmeat (the latter was some kind of public leader or troublemaker in Alexandria around 1100). *Sāqiya,* "female cupbearer" in classical Arabic, cannot have this meaning in the Geniza society. Since the word appears only in a family name and in a list, its real meaning cannot yet be made out. Perhaps the sāqiya prepared and sold certain beverages.[17]

Just as the readying of the bride for her queenlike role required an expert, thus the very elaborate apparel, in which the dead, especially dead women, were buried and the treatment of the body before burial, were confided to a specialist. (The Yemenites say: "Man enjoys life only twice: at his marriage and at his death.") She was called "the washer," and since people in these matters cling very tenaciously to their local customs, it is not surprising to find in one and the same list a (female) washer for the Rūm, or European, Jewesses (mostly refugees), and another for those of Old Cairo. Wailing, too, was part of the funeral business and done mostly by women.[18]

When E. N. Adler, the famous collector of manuscripts, visited Aleppo, Syria, in 1888, he had opportunity to attend a performance by Jewish women dancers from Damascus. Only one reference to this profession has been found so far in the Geniza and even this is doubtful.[19]

The most natural of all female remunerative occupations, that of domestic help, is all but absent from the Geniza records. It has already been stressed that the society described in this book shunned any form of employment, and as the maidservants doing household work were legally slaves, it is natural that free women were reluctant to join their

ranks. Only well-to-do people could afford to keep a slave, however, while the need for an at least temporary replacement of the housewife must have been a frequent occurrence. The answer to this puzzle is the extended family, the fact that married sons used to live with their parents and sisters and often also with married brothers in one and the same house, so that normally a number of women were at hand in case one of them was temporarily incapacitated. The availability in the bazaar of freshly cooked food of all descriptions (cf. above, p. 115), also was of great practical importance in this respect, and it is not excluded that this socioeconomic feature had its origin in the fact that families belonging to the lower middle class and the poorer sections of the population could not afford to keep a servant.

Free women as domestic help are found only under special circumstances, in particular in the houses of widowed religious dignitaries. In his will an old cantor leaves 2 dinars to a woman who had looked after him.[20] Another woman, who had done the same for a *rāv,* or spiritual leader of a community, receives clothing from a public charity.[21] A woman of European origin who had a married daughter herself, writes from al-Mahdiyya to her mother and sister in Alexandria: "I work as a servant in any house," complaining about the weakness of her body and her old age. In the same letter she mentions that her son had left her eight years before and nothing had been heard from him since. These circumstances explain why she had to humiliate herself with work in other people's houses. She was a foreigner and had no one to maintain her.[22] On the occasion of the marriage of her daughter the wife of a Kohen is described as serving in the house of a judge.[23]

Somewhat more befitting a free woman was the service of the community by taking care of the cleaning of a synagogue building or a school. Both the synagogue of the Palestinians and that of the Iraqis in Fustat had a *khādima,* the female equivalent of khādim, or beadle.[24] In one case we read about a woman serving in a *kuttāb,* or Bible school.[25] These women received bread and clothing, and also payment from the community, all of which, however, smacked of charity.[26] Service, under any circumstances, was not a proper way of earning one's livelihood in that free-enterprise society of the Geniza world.

## 7. SLAVES AND SLAVE GIRLS

In order to be able to understand the economic role and the social position of slaves in the society reflected in the Geniza records, we must free ourselves entirely of the notions familiar to us from our readings about life on American plantations or in ancient Rome. Slavery in the period under consideration was neither industrial nor agricultural; with the exception of the armies, which were largely composed of mercenaries who were legally slaves, it was not collective, but individ-

ual. It was a personal service in the widest sense of the word, which, when the master served was of high rank or wealthy, carried with it great economic advantages, as well as social prestige.

In a famous passage in his *Wealth of Nations,* Adam Smith says: "It appears . . . from the experience of all ages and nations . . . that the work done by free men comes cheaper in the end than that performed by slaves." [1] In this general form, this statement does not hold true and has been refuted by competent historians. It certainly does not apply to the period of early Islam, where an abundant supply of captives was available in the wake of the incessant wars of conquest, so that free men's labor could be replaced by the cheaper work of slaves. As is well known, the ninth century, the third of Islam, witnessed a tremendous revolt of masses of Negro slaves in southern Iraq, which shook the very foundations of the caliphate of Baghdad, and, somewhat later, the council of a comparatively small Carmathian community in eastern Arabia owned a labor force of tens of thousands of Negroes doing agricultural work.

In the Mediterranean area of the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries the situation was different. Slaves had to be imported from faraway countries and were expensive. If we disregard the armies, slaves certainly formed only a small minority of the population, unlike the situation in imperial Rome, where, according to views widely held, three-quarters of the inhabitants were either slaves or freedmen.[2] His high value protected the slave and made him an object of consideration, in addition to the humanitarian laws and admonitions made in his favor by the three monotheistic religions.

The very word "slave," *'abd,* which at that time had already acquired the connotation of Negro,[3] was felt as being improper and was replaced by circumscriptions such as "boy" and "young man." As the same words were applied to free employees, it is sometimes difficult to decide whether a person referred to in a Geniza letter was a slave or not, in particular in the case of persons serving as business agents. The situation is still more complicated by the fact that a freedman too might be called "young man of so-and-so," even if his former proprietor had died long before.[4] Slaves engaged mainly in household work were called *waṣīf,* "servant," a word that, it seems, was restricted to unfree persons and, therefore again was exchanged for another root, namely, *khadam,* which was normally applied to the service of rulers or that of a community. Female slaves, too, were never designated with the Arabic term having this meaning, but by *jāriya,* "girl." As this word, too, became almost synonymous with slave, it was in its turn often replaced by *waṣīfa,* "servant." Female slaves, as a rule, bore proper names indicative of their social station, while male slaves, especially when they were business representatives, often had names which were also in use among the free population.

The situation of male slaves was essentially different from that of

the females. In Islamic times, the Middle East had become accustomed to being governed by slaves. The rulers, always distrustful of their own people, used to surround themselves with persons brought from distant regions, who knew no other attachment except to their masters, but who very often became the masters of their masters. Immediately before the Fatimid conquest, Egypt was ruled by a black eunuch, an extremely capable man. The Fatimids and Ayyubids made copious use of European, Turkish, and other slaves for the highest posts of confidence, and, under their successors, the Mamluks, what had been a practice became a principle: The ruling oligarchy admitted to its ranks solely persons who had been slaves.

On a small scale, we find a similar situation in the life of the bourgeoisie reflected in the Geniza records. Male slaves were mainly employed in positions of trust. Rarely do we read about male menials, as when a man, on his deathbed, after having distributed his possessions, orders the sale of his riding beast and his waṣīf (in this sequence) in order to pay the burial expenses with their price.[5] In a letter from Acre, shortly after it was taken by the Crusaders in 1104, a merchant describes to his mother the terrors of the war, as well as the usefulness of his servant in such a situation: "I arrived in Palestine before Acre was taken and thus witnessed the vicissitudes of the siege. We constantly faced danger of death, for we were near to them [the Crusaders] day and night, hearing their talk and they heard ours, and our bread was colored with blood. . . . Mubārak [the slave] sends you his regards. I have no other help besides him. He saved me 10 dirhems a month—may God keep him. He is the groom, he takes care of the bedding, he is the cook, he does the washing and he looks after my wardrobe." Clearly, savings of 10 dirhems a month on service interested the old lady more than additional details about the war.[6]

The acquisition of a male slave was a great affair, on which a man was congratulated almost as if a son had been born to him.[7] No wonder, for a slave fulfilled tasks similar to those of a son. He managed the affairs of his master, he traveled with him or for him, or he was in charge of his master's business, when the latter himself was out of town. The ghulām, or "young man," of a businessman would be consulted in all affairs of his master, and his movements would be reported in the same way as those of other important merchants. "Muslim acquaintances who arrived from Ascalon," writes a Palestinian living in Bilbays on the caravan route between Palestine and Cairo, "told me that Abu 'l-Munā, the ghulām of our lord [the head of the Jews in the Fatimid empire] has arrived in Ascalon." Similar statements appear frequently, and, at least in letters referring to the India trade, a trusted slave is repeatedly referred to with the title "the elder."[8] When a slave accompanied his master on his travels, we find that letters would be confided to both.[9]

The following account well exemplifies the dualism in the social posi-

tion of a ghulām. Its scene was ʿAydhāb, the great port on the East African coast, which served as the terminal for ships coming from South Arabia, India, East Africa, and China. In December, 1141, there arrived among the Jewish merchants of Egypt and the Maghreb returning from India, Ṣāfī, "the pure, sincere," the slave and agent of the head of the Jewish academy in Old Cairo, and one Ibn Jamāhir, a notable, well known to us as a troublemaker from other papers relevant to the India trade. Ṣāfī insulted the notable in the presence of Muslim fellow merchants, accusing him of having disposed of a slave girl, after having had a child by her, in Berbera on the African coast. Ibn Jamāhir filed a complaint of slander against him with the governor of the town. The governor, well aware of the special status of Ṣāfī, tried to consult the Jewish merchants staying in the town, most of whom, however, disregarded his invitation. After Ibn Jamāhir's Muslim friends had given witness, the governor ordered Ṣāfī to be flogged. "What!" exclaimed Ṣāfī, "I, the ghulām of the Head of the Academy, should be flogged?" His protest was of no avail, for he was flogged and jailed. One of the Jewish merchants from the Maghreb intervened, and Ṣāfī was set free—"not without loss of money," whether for himself or his liberator, is not stated. The document, from which we learn about all this, was written, of course, because the affair was to have a legal aftermath before the Jewish court in Old Cairo.[10]

The agents who were legally slaves were allowed to do business on their own account, and some must have done very well. One document shows Durrī ("gem"), the ghulām of a Nagid, making one of the largest contributions to a public appeal, comparable to those of upper middle class people. In another document, dated 1161, a ghulām (also bearing the name Ṣāfī) gives 2 dinars to the widow of the partner of his master, while "the young man" of the tax-farmer of the market of Palermo contracted in 1063 a partnership with a Jewish merchant which involved very high sums.[11] One ghulām, called Ṭāhir ("pure"), was even the proprietor of a boat.[12] Sometimes a master would do a service for his own servant, as when a Tunisian merchant ordered old silver for himself and also for his ghulām Jurj (the same word as modern George)—for the latter to the notable amount of 27 dinars.[13]

While deeds of sale, gift, or bequest of slave girls have been found in considerable number among the Geniza records, only one such document has come to my attention so far with regard to adult males (there are some for minors). In it, the Indian servant Patan Patana is sold in Fustat by a perfumer to a banker for 19-½ dinars (June, 1194). In the India trade, of course, the local agents, who were legally slaves, and whose reliability has already been praised by the Muslim writer al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 869), were indispensable.[14] So far only one deed of manumission of a male slave has been found (as against, at least, six, for females), while the emancipation of slaves must have been extremely common—as we may conclude from the fact that freedmen are mentioned so often. It

should be noted that the act of manumission had to be made before a Jewish court, for it converted the slave into a person with all the religious duties of a Jew and enabled him to marry a Jewish wife. The scarcity of legal deeds with regard to adult male slaves—as opposed to the frequent reference to them in letters—might partly have had its cause in the fact that, as a rule, they were owned only by members of the upper class, which, having its seat in (New) Cairo, is not fully represented in the Geniza records. It is also possible that there were certain restrictions with regard to transactions in adult male slaves which necessitated that they should be made before a Muslim court.

Slave girls as domestic help and nurses of children were found in every well-to-do family. With regard to their position, there was, of course, a deep cleavage between the Christian and Jewish minorities on the one hand and the Muslim majority on the other. While Christianity and Judaism disapproved of any sexual relations outside wedlock, in Islam a female slave was at the disposal of her master, and he could possess as many of them as he liked and his purse allowed. We should not judge this institution too harshly. In a polygamous society, it had certain advantages—for all parties concerned—over marriage with several free wives enjoying equal rights. Al-Jabartī, an excellent Muslim historian (writing in the early decades of the nineteenth century) praised his old mother for buying a beautiful slave girl for his father with her own money; he regarded this as an act of particular piety. It was the Judeo-Christian attitude that appeared strange and abnormal to a keen Muslim observer.[15] Judaism, in particular, regarded intercourse with a slave girl as a very great sin, punishable according to some authorities, with death, to be inflicted by zealots (based on the biblical story Numbers 25:6–12). A man was not allowed to be under one roof with a female slave, unless his mother, sister, or wife lived in the same house. Transgressions were punished by forced sale of the slave, the price to be distributed among the poor, or by outright excommunication.[16] We see indeed that an old man who had no one to take care of him had to apply to the "mercy" of the court for permission to buy a maidservant. Free domestic help, we remember, was difficult to be had.[17]

It is only natural that the social habits of a majority should affect minorities living among it, and the state of utmost dependence, in which slave girls were found, constituted in itself a great temptation. The attractive slave was the easy prey of her master's lust also in Roman Christian society.[18] No wonder that we find occasional references to such occurrences also in the Geniza records. We have already heard about the India merchant who was accused of having kept a slave concubine and having had a child by her. In a query submitted to Abraham Maimonides we read about a married man with children who forsook his family in his native Alexandria, acquired a slave girl in Old Cairo,

bought her beautiful dresses, the like of which his wife had never had, and made off with her to the faraway Fayyūm province.[19] An official addressing the same dignitary reports about another man from Alexandria, a Kohen, who had left his newly wed wife and taken a Christian slave girl with him to a village in the Buḥayra province, the taxes of which he had farmed. A ban had already been pronounced against him.[20] There are a few queries and references to similar and perhaps identical cases,[21] but it seems that, in this respect, the society reflected in the Geniza records differed markedly from that of the Jews in Spain during the thirteenth century, when slave concubinage became a blatant social evil.

One differentiated between domestics for personal service, those doing household work in general, and nurses. A rich bride took with her to her new home two maids, jāriya, and two servants, waṣīfa, the total value of whom was estimated as being 100 dinars.[22] A respectable merchant in Alexandria, whose wife had died recently, writes to his friend in Old Cairo that he had none to serve him and "to hand a cup of water" to his children or to himself. No help could be found in the Jewish quarter of his town, therefore, he asked the addressee to buy him a chaste slave woman, who would be able to take care of the children.[23] We find a similar request made by another Alexandrian in a letter to his brother in Old Cairo and by a man in the latter town writing to his father on travel in one of the countries of the Indian Ocean.[24] In a better house there would be a *dāda* (cf. English *dad* for father), or nurse, for the children, and a waṣīfa, who did the rougher work. A woman on her deathbed forbids the sale of the Sudanese dāda and her little son, because her own little daughter was so fond of them, and, in order to emphasize her will, even pronounced a curse on any one who would dare to sell them.[25] A widower confides his three children (not so small, because he also pays tuition for them) to a family together with their Nubian nurse "Kinky." In the lengthy document confirming that the father has made all the payments due from him, the family certifies that the slave was his property.[26]

It is not impossible that humane and proselytizing tendencies were also active in the acquisition and upbringing of slave girls. Thus, the wife of a scholar and judge frees on her deathbed her two slaves, who were virgins, and, it seems, mere children, and provides them with housing and board for life on condition they remained inside the Jewish fold.[27] One of the girls, called Dhahab, "Gold," had been given by a widow to her brother a few years earlier when she was only three years old.[28] We find repeatedly that people were eager to acquire slave girls of tender age. A trader sends to his wife from India a "maid" six years old.[29] A woman from Fustat asks a relative, a government official in al-Bahnasā in Middle Egypt, to buy for her "a black, freshly imported girl, 5–6 years old."[30] This acquisition of maidservants at a

time when they were mere children was done in order to give those future members of the household a certain measure of practical and also of religious education.

The religious position of slaves is a very interesting topic indeed. In this respect, the three monotheistic religions varied widely. In Judaism, both male and female slaves were obliged to adopt a milder form of religious observances, including the full keeping of the Sabbath rest (which they might not have disliked). As other proselytes, they were initiated by baptism. According to the law, if a slave refused to be baptized within one year, he had to be resold. For readers unfamiliar with the history of rites it may be remarked that baptism in Christianity is an inheritance from the mother religion. Maimonides ruled that slaves, once they had accepted baptism, were members of the covenant of Israel.[31] He was followed in this by his son and successor Abraham, who states in an autograph responsum that a baptized slave was in ritual matters more trustworthy than a Karaite.[32] A contract of sale, written in or around 1159, describes the slave girl, Ṣayd, "Quarry (game)" expressly as a Muslim and this fact cannot have diminished her value much, for she was sold for 19-½ dinars.[33] Of the Nubian slave "Success," sold in summer, 1100, her mistress testified: "I believe she is a Christian," using the Persian word *tersā(wiyya)*, perhaps as a matter of precaution.[34] In an appearance before a qadi a slave girl first contended that she was sold as a Muslim in the Sudanese port of 'Aydhāb, but later retracted asserting that in her native country she had already been Jewish, whereupon her case was relegated to a Jewish court.[35]

A similar story is contained in a query sent to Maimonides. A Jewish bachelor had bought a Christian "beauty" (the technical term for a prisoner of war chosen as concubine; she probably was brought to Alexandria by pirates). He converted her and stayed with her in the house of his father, stepmother, and their three children. "But the house was vast." Denounced, for under Islamic rule a Christian was not permitted to convert to any religion but Islam, the girl contended before the qadi that she was Jewish, the daughter of a Jewess. This settled the affair as far as Islamic law was concerned. There remained the question what to do with the case from the point of view of Jewish religion. Maimonides, in his practical wisdom, decided that the young man should emancipate his love and then marry her. According to strict law, this was illegal. For anyone who had lived illicitly with a woman or was only under such a suspicion was forbidden to marry her all his life. (This was also Roman law. Our newspapers would go out of business if this was common law here.) But, Maimonides adds, he already had given several such decisions in other cases of slave girl concubines in order to give an opportunity to those who wished to mend their ways and to lead orderly lives. He did so, as he wrote,

relying on a daring maxim of the ancient sages: "Pay regard to God by disregarding his law." [36]

The material presented here—other examples follow—proves that, in Fatimid and Ayyubid times, a certain latitude obtained as regards the religious attachment of slaves. The Islamic injunction that no one should be converted to any religion except Islam was largely disregarded. Many male and female slaves must have been baptized to Judaism. In addition to the examples cited, this might be inferred from the many Jewish freedmen and freedwomen mentioned in the Geniza records. On the other hand, the Jewish authorities seem not to have insisted on the enforcement of the law that slaves had to accept baptism, and marriage with former slave girls who had been, or had been under the suspicion to have served as, concubines, were not altogether lacking.

As to the provenance and price of slaves, naturally we learn little about males, since only few deeds concerning them have been found in the Geniza. Female Negroes were rarely employed. Besides the imported black child mentioned, only one has been ascertained, called "Musk" (see p. 141, below). Musk, in Arabic poetry, often designates beautiful dark complexion, but, as a name, should not be taken as describing its bearer as a Negro, since free white females also could be called thus.[37] Only when expressly described thus, should "Musk" be taken as belonging to the black race.

We have already read about the Sudanese dāda, or nurse; another Sudanese, nominally worth 30 gold pieces, in fact perhaps only 15, was given to the daughter of her mistress as part of her marriage portion.[38] The race most favored for household service was the Nubian. The Nubian "Salt" (denoting wittiness and grace) was sold in 1084 for 15 dinars, and another girl of the same provenance, named "Pleasure," was acquired by the widow of the merchant and scholar Nahray b. Nissīm for 20 dinars in 1108. Whether the Nubian "Salt" who was sold in 1100 for 20 dinars is identical with the one just mentioned cannot be ascertained. In any case, the seller of 1100 was different from the buyer of 1084.[39] "Dexterity," the Nubian, was sold, together with her little daughter, in 1094 in Fustat to a Mr. Joseph b. Solomon Kohen for 28 dinars, and again in 1105, this time alone and in Cairo by two brothers, sons of a Mr. Moses Kohen, a high government official, to their sister for 20 dinars. If indeed the same person is meant, "Dexterity" must have changed hands between 1094 and 1105, most probably inside the same family.[40] "Arsenic"—possibly called so because of her light, silvery-white complexion—the Nubian, was given, in 1134 by a husband to his wife in exchange for the girl she had brought in as part of her marriage portion. Another slave by the same name was sold in 1152 and a third was presented by a father to his two daughters as a gift in 1182.[41]

Next to Nubians, we hear mostly of European slave girls. In 1070, a woman bearing the proud name Sitt al-Rūm, "Queen of the Rūm," who had been freed by her master before his death, appeared in person before the rabbinical court of Alexandria to appoint an attorney, to collect a loan that she had granted.[42] In 1110, "Steadiness," "from the land of Greece," was emancipated by a physician.[43] At approximately the same time, the writer of an interesting but fragmentary letter states to have taken action with regard to a "Frankish" girl.[44] The highest price for a slave noted in the Geniza, 80 dinars, was fixed for a Rūmiyya, brought into marriage by a bride (who also possessed gold vessels valued at 300 dinars, a rare item) in January, 995.[45] The "Christian" slave girls, mentioned above as illegal concubines, also must have been Europeans, as no local citizens could be reduced to slavery.

Slaves from India, male and female, were mentioned earlier. "Inaccessible," an Indian girl worth 20 dinars formed part of a marriage portion totaling 183 dinars in the 1120's.[46] About thirty years later, in 1157, she was emancipated by her mistress, a lady known from three other documents and certainly not identical with the one to whom she was given as a marriage gift.[47] Another Indian girl, called "Gazelle," was sold in Fustat by one prominent merchant to another.[48]

A group of slave girls frequently referred to were those born in slavery, called *muwallada*. It is not evident, through the prices mentioned or otherwise, that they were preferred to others, although it is likely that this was the case.[49] When, in November, 1175, the physician Jekuthiel b. Moses sold Fayrūz (Turquoise), who was born in his house, for only 12 dinars, the price shows that the slave was a mere boy at that time.[50] The lowest price encountered thus far in a Geniza document for a slave girl was obtained by the Persian "Perfume," who was sold for 10-½ dinars, which sum included brokerage and sales tax.[51] Another Persian was sold for 13 dinars.[52] No general conclusions should be drawn from these two instances.

Mothers were normally sold together with their children, even when the latter had attained an age when they were able, according to the notions of that period, to do service. Thus "Peacock" was sold in 1241 together with her son "The Blessed" for 40 dinars, although the latter was about ten years old.[53] The same price is given for a maidservant and her son "Happiness," both forming part of a marriage portion in an incomplete document, while the price for a mother and son in another defective deed has not been preserved.[54] We have already seen that in 1094 "Dexterity" was accompanied by a child, but in 1105 she was not. "Lucky Fellow," an Abyssinian, was sold for 10-¼ dinars, when he was still a minor, but he was brought to Egypt as a child, not separated from his mother, while in slavery.[55] In a will, a woman states that a maidservant who had been bought by her with money given to her by her mother, had a daughter who belonged to the latter. The old

mother of the dying woman who lived with her in the same house intended perhaps to bring up the little girl in the Jewish faith as an act of piety.[56] We had a similar case before. In one document, the diary of a famous judge, two-year-old "Fidelity" remained in the possession of the seller of her mother "Darling," who herself was born a slave. As the buyer paid only 2 out of the price of 34 dinars, while he was supposed to pay the rest in monthly installments during two-and-a-half years, perhaps buyer and seller lived next door to each other. In any case, the separation of mothers and minor children was illegal.[57]

The general steadiness of prices characteristic for our period applies also to slave girls. The standard price was 20 dinars. We already had some examples and many more could be adduced. "Wild Rose" was sold for this price in 1148 to Moses, "the Nagid designate," son of the Nagid Samuel b. Hananiah.[58] An unnamed servant accompanied her mistress to her new home forty years later, the marriage contract stating expressly that 20 dinars was the *real* price.[59] In the fragment of an eleventh-century marriage contract of a woman who had been married before, "Prodigality" is estimated as worth 40 dinars. But her name should not deceive us. In some places and times it was customary, for the greater glory of the bride, to list in her marriage contract sums twice as high as they really were, and other details of that trousseau suggest that its inventory was drawn up according to that custom.[60] "Success," and again "Brightness," were sold for 20 dinars, the latter in 1226.[61] An Abyssinian slave girl with a white speck in her left eye was sold in 1280 for 266-½ silver pieces, which, at the ratio of gold and silver usual at this time, was the equivalent of 20 dinars.[62] It goes without saying that, according to the circumstances, other prices were obtained. For this, too, we have already had several examples, the European slave girl costing 80 dinars being most outstanding. Another exceptional price, 40-1/24 dinars, was paid for the wailing woman "Perfume" in summer, 1156. She was a professional and, as such, a source of income for her proprietor.[63] The other prices group around 20 dinars, with lesser values for girls of inferior quality or young age. We find slave girls sold for 25, 23, 22, 21, 20-½, 19-½, 19, 18, 17, 16-¾, 15-½, 15 (three cases; one was called "Queen of the Lovers"), 14-¼, 13, 12, and even 10-½ dinars.[64] Other prices have appeared above and are mentioned below. The exceptionally high price of 34 dinars for "Darling," mentioned in the preceding paragraph was, at least partly, due to the fact that the buyer did not pay in cash.

Thus far, the evidence provided by our documents does not allow us to make any statement as to the frequency with which slaves changed hands. For even where deeds refer to the same names within a lifetime, it is by no means sure that these names, strange and unusual as they may appear to us, belonged to the same person. We already had two occurrences each of Ṣāfī ("Sincere"), "Gold," "Dexterity," "Pleasure," "Perfume," "Gazelle," and 'lm (in n. 64), and we also find "Musk" and

"Turquoise" at least twice, "Happiness" and "Arsenic" three, and "Success" four times.[65] A "Fidelity" was set free in January, 1181, by three sisters whose property she was.[66] If she was identical with "Fidelity" who was two years old in 1141–1142 (cf. p. 139, above), she had changed hands at least once during this period of forty years.

Sometimes a document states expressly how the slave had come into the possession of the seller, implying at the same time why he sold her so quickly. A man had bought a maidservant for his daughter. When the marriage was not realized, he sold her off.[67] On June 7, 1156, a judge notes in his record book that "Incense" was sold for 15-½ dinars, the sales tax and broker's fees to be paid by the seller; exactly a month later, she was sold for 17-½ dinars, but the dues were included in that price; the record states that she was the girl who had changed hands a month before. Presumably the first buyer acted only as a middleman.[68] In one case, the second sale and its date are entered on the reverse side of the deed describing the first. An occurrence like this is easily explained. One of the usual conditions of a marriage contract stipulated that no husband was permitted to retain a maidservant whom his wife disliked. Thus the quick resale of "Musk"—this was the name of the girl concerned—might have had its reason in the fact that she did not get along well with her new mistress.[69]

It should be noted that none of the persons involved in the many transactions mentioned in this chapter seems to have been a professional slave-trader. The term nowhere appears in the relevant documents. The first proprietor of "Musk," the girl just mentioned, was a perfumer, the second a wax-maker and the third a housewife. The same holds true of all other Geniza documents dealing with the subject. In the thousands of letters, accounts, and other papers dealing with business (with one possible exception) I have not found any reference to the sale of slaves (in the plural) by Jews. Thus, I can only confirm the opinion expressed by David Neustadt (now: Ayalon) thirty years ago, that, during the classical Geniza period, the Jews had no share in the slave trade.[70]

Although all transactions in slaves mentioned in our papers were made between private persons who most probably knew each other personally, the contracts usually mention a commission to be paid by the purchaser to a broker, as well as a sales tax, literally "dues of the market." This procedure was not only a matter of precaution (one wanted the slave to be valued by an expert), but an official injunction, in order to make an evasion of the sales tax impossible.[71] The purchaser undertakes to acquiesce in all defects the slave might have, who under no circumstances might be returned—conditions summarized with the formula "like the sale of imported slaves." But even in contracts which contain this formula defects would sometimes be mentioned.[72] On his part, the seller guarantees to protect the buyer against any claims that may be raised against him with regard to the proprietorship of the

slave in any court, Jewish or Gentile.[73] In some contracts it is stated that the slave had lived for some time in the house of her future proprietor (mostly in case the latter was a lady), who had become well acquainted with all her apparent or hidden imperfections.[74]

These contracts of sale have quite a number of legalistic aspects that are well worth studying. From the socioeconomic point of view it is remarkable that almost all transactions were made in cash whereas normally business was conducted on credit. We had one case of sale on credit with a very small down payment (p. 139, above). There, where the seller retained a two-year-old child of the sold slave it is highly probable that either the buyer lived in his immediate vicinity, as surmised above, or that the mother, too, remained in the seller's house until the installments—1 dinar per month—were fully paid. Such a situation is more clearly brought out in a question submitted to Maimonides. A boy was sold for 12-½ dinars, to be paid, as in the previous case, in monthly installments of 1 dinar. The seller used to go to the buyer's store to receive the monthly payment. One day he found the store deserted and no trace of the debtor left. The seller could not wait, because he intended to travel to Yemen. Question: Is he permitted to take his property, namely the slave for whom payments had already been made, or has he to appoint a representative who would collect the still-outstanding installments? This seems to imply that, in principle, payments for slaves had to be made in cash, and where credit was granted the slave remained at the disposal of the seller.[75]

A student of Muslim or Jewish lawbooks is inclined to ridicule the amount of casuistry and hairsplitting devoted to the problem of a slave belonging to more than one master, or being partly a slave and partly free. The Geniza documents and the contemporaneous responsa prove, however, that occurrences like these must have been frequent indeed. Above we had the cases of a slave freed by three sisters, another sold by two brothers, and a third given by a father as a joint gift to his two daughters. Such a relationship is well illustrated in this story: half the rights on a female black slave called "Musk," which rights a man had inherited from his deceased wife, were given by him to his married son; the married son's wife who was also his cousin, was given the other half by *her* mother, who had inherited these rights from the girl's grandfather. Thus, "Musk" had remained in one family for three generations, but had been legally the property of two different persons for an extended period. From some indications in the deed concerned it may be concluded that the two married sisters (the mothers of the couple to whom the maid was given) had lived in one house and actually shared the services of the family domestic.[76] It is natural that things did not always go smoothly. In a query addressed to Abraham Maimonides we find an extremely complicated lawsuit between two sisters concerning a slave girl, which was temporarily solved by the decision that she should serve one sister one month and one the other. The slave ob-

viously did not consent to a decision that gave her in part to a mistress, who, according to the details mentioned, had no rights to her. After three days she appeared before a Muslim court, alleged that the new parttime mistress had beaten her, and then declared her willingness to embrace Islam. This, of course, had the consequence that the two rival sisters had to sell her, since, according to strict law a non-Muslim should not keep a Muslim slave.[77]

This incident shows that a slave was not a mere object, but a person with rights and a will to take her fate into her own hands. Therefore, deeds of sale state expressly that the slave recognized the right of proprietorship of her master or mistress.[78] In a will made around 1100, the testator, who left a wife and an infant daughter, stipulated that the maidservant should never be sold, except if she herself wished so. Clearly, he wanted, on the one hand, to retain the help of a faithful servant for his little family and, on the other hand, to leave her freedom of choice.[79] In family quarrels about the possession of a slave girl, the latter did not remain neutral. "I suspend the litigation," writes a mother from Alexandria to her son in Old Cairo, "until you report to me the legal opinion of the Rayyis [presumably a judge, or the Nagid himself]. Meanwhile, the slave girl 'Success' went to the wife of your maternal uncle, your aunt has alienated her from me, until the girl went over to her."[80] We read above about a slave girl getting rid of an undesirable mistress by embracing Islam and two others asserting to be Jewish in a Muslim court. When, in a period of famine, a family intended to sell the maidservant, she declared that she did not agree to be sold.[81]

With this, we have come to the great question of the treatment of slaves. One is tempted to quote the paragraph with which Maimonides concludes the chapter on slavery in his code of law: "It is both pious and reasonable on the part of a master to be merciful and just towards his slave, not to overburden him with work and not to cause him grief, and to let him share all food and drink taken by himself. . . . He should not humiliate him either by infliction of corporal punishment or even by words. . . . He should not shout at him . . . but talk to him quietly and listen to his arguments. . . ." Similar admonitions could be quoted from Christian and Muslim sources. But, of course, not all people were pious and reasonable. As far as our actual information from the Geniza records is concerned, the male slaves, who normally acted as business representatives, are referred to in the same way as respected merchants and, in case they served also as personal factotums, were greeted in letters as other members of the household, sometimes with the honorable epithet "the elder."[82] When we find a case (above, p. 133) where such a slave was flogged as a punishment for alleged defamation, we should not forget that in those times even viziers were exposed to such public humiliation. As we shall see in the

discussion of the position of the freedmen, there existed a strong family attachment between the master and his slave.

Such attachment was even more pronounced in the case of female slaves. Naturally, no uniformity can be expected in such matters. Still, some general trends are definitely recognizable. Slave girls were greeted in family letters and they sent greetings to the relatives of their masters.[83] This was perhaps not common in more ancient times, for even the eccentric poet Abu 'l-'Alā al-Ma'arrī, who wrote many things that others abhorred to mention, apologizes when extending greetings to a black slave.[84] A merchant abroad would be reminded by his wife to bring home a present also for the maidservant (mercifully, it was stated what).[85] Just as most excited congratulations were extended at the acquisition of a male slave (cf. p. 132, above), so we read about expressions of sympathy at the death of a slave girl. In a Geniza formulary for letters, we find a long model for a letter of condolence at such an occasion. Despite the Hebrew characters used in the formulary, we may suspect here a Muslim original, where "slave girl" would be synonymous with concubine.[86] We also have a contemporaneous poem by the most celebrated Jewish poet and saint, Judah ha-Levi, written in Alexandria on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, where he apologizes to a friend for being unable, because of an eye disease, to express his sympathy in person on the occasion of the demise of his slave girl. Here, only a family domestic could be meant. Still, after an appropriate introduction, the poet has the following to say:

> You miss a maid in your house,
> But, know that Fortune herself is your slave.
> She was purchased by your silver,
> But princes are bought by your deeds.
> Be not too mournful. Regard her as a ransom
> For your soul and the souls of all your children.
> Regain your poise, abandon apprehensions,
> The angels of peace themselves are at your command.

The tenor of the poem clearly indicates that the death of a maid, like that of a close relative, was regarded not only as a loss, but as an ill omen foreboding possible future disasters.[87]

A touchstone for the treatment of slaves is the frequency of reports or discussions about their running away from their masters. Thus far, only a few such instances have been traced in the Geniza papers. In a legal document, we read that a husband, before setting out on a prolonged journey, left 25 dinars and 5 irdabbs of wheat for his wife, her two daughters, and the maidservant. On the reverse side, the remark is added that the maid "was lost from the house" even before the master left.[88] In the fragment of a deed in which a slave boy was sold for only 11 dinars, the seller, albeit not accepting responsibility for

his defects, noted that he had run away several times (and also that he had committed a theft; this gem of a servant was called "Ṣandal," Sandalwood).[89] A special case is a letter written in the 1060's, when Bedouins conquered the Egyptian capital, and many slaves (the historians say: slave girls) took advantage of the opportunity to run away with them. The wife of a distinguished merchant who was at that time in Alexandria on business informs him that she suspected that their ghulām, who, it seems, was in charge of their local business, would do the same. She seems to have had no such apprehensions with regard to her maidservant, also mentioned in the letter.[90]

Data about slaves set free by their masters are as numerous in the Geniza as the references to their running away are rare. These manumissions were deeds of piety and gratitude, often enacted on the deathbed. One, concerned with slaves who were mere children, was discussed above, page 135. In another deathbed declaration, made in fall, 1230, a dying woman says: "My maidservant has looked after me in this and preceding illnesses as neither my mother nor my sister has done.[91] Now, please bear witness that this servant shall not be sold and not be bought, nor be molested in any way [that is, not be taken as a concubine].[92] Truth has come and vain things have gone [i.e., I am dying] [93] and I am under the mercy of God, the exalted." A declaration like this, which does not contain a formal expression of emancipation, must have given many a headache to the lawyers dealing with the execution of the will.[94] In a similar case, in Baghdad, when a member of the family of the Head of the Diaspora declared at the point of death: "My slave and my maid shall not be owned by anyone after my demise," this disposition was contested by the heirs, but the Gaon decided that manumission was intended.[95]

In many cases slaves were emancipated by their masters during their lifetime. This is proved by the deeds of manumission preserved and by references to freedmen at a time when their former proprietors were still alive. Rarely do we read about the specific circumstances under which freedom was granted. The case described in the following was perhaps typical. Bahiyya, a daughter of Ibn 'Awkal, a prominent merchant and communal leader about whom we shall read again and again, had received from her husband a slave girl of European provenance whom the man had inherited from a sister. Two documents deal with this girl, whose name was Nujūm, "Stars." In the first, Bahiyya gives her as a gift to a cousin who was married to another sister-in-law of hers. In the second, that cousin sets Nujūm free, his wife joining him in the solemn act of manumission. Here we have the case of a slave who had already changed hands within a family three times. She was returned to the sister of the original proprietor who, together with her husband, then gave her her freedom.[96]

The deeds of manumission preserved correspond to the strict requirements of Jewish law. They state that the former slave was now entirely

free, with neither the master nor his legal representatives having any right on the person, progeny, or property of the emancipated. The latter was at liberty to adopt a new name, to marry a person of Jewish faith, and to do in general what any free person was allowed to do, including the study of the Torah. Thus, legally, the position of a Jewish freedman differed markedly from that of a Muslim. According to Muslim (and Roman) law, there remained many bonds between the former master and his freedman. The latter was called in Arabic *mawlā*, which means "the attached," while in Hebrew his designation was "freedman." [97]

In actual life, the Geniza shows us, relationships similar to those existing between relatives prevailed. In or out of bondage the slave was a member of the family. When a town was sacked by marauders, as happened to al-Maḥalla in the turbulent 1060's and slaves were taken captive, we read that their masters tried to ransom them, the same word being used as that applied to free persons captured in war or by pirates. This was in accordance with Jewish law which prescribes that the ransoming of slaves was as much a religious duty as ransoming free persons.[98] Many marriage contracts and other documents concerning marriages of emancipated women and men have been preserved. These are often called by the name of their former proprietors, and it is reasonable to assume that the many objects of jewelry, clothing, bedding, and household goods forming their marriage portions, were, at least partly, given to them by their previous masters. Even in the contract made at her second marriage (she then was a widow), Mu'tazz, "The one held in high esteem," is still referred to as "the freedwoman of Moses b. Paltiel" (most probably a member of the prominent family known by that name). Otherwise, all the conditions were the same as those in regular marriage contracts, and her dowry was far higher than that of many women born free.[99] Munā, "Wishes," the freedwoman of Ibn Futayḥ (a family known through three centuries) married in 1184 a Levi, who must have been a respected person, for he is known from various documents as a Parnas, or guardian of orphans and the poor. Twenty years later, in 1203, when she was credited with a sum of 23 dinars, which she had lent to a perfumer, she was still called "freedwoman" in the relevant document, while her husband bore his title "Parnas." [100] It is also remarkable that in a bill of divorce from Bilbays, dated 1172, the divorcée Sitt al-Bayt ("The Mistress of the Household") is described as "daughter of Muwaffaq, the freedman." [101]

Similar bonds of attachment existed between male slaves and the houses of their former masters. In a letter from the head of the Jewish community in Qayrawān, he asks his opposite number in Old Cairo (shortly after 1006), to help a freedman of his deceased father-in-law with regard to claims on the estate of a woman (probably his sister), who had been freed by the same relative.[102] In the terrible years of famine 1201–1202 a slave "took his refuge with" his former proprietor,

a woman, and also helped her with his own money.[103] In a marriage contract between two emancipated slaves, the bridegroom stipulates that his future wife should live with him in the house of his former master—who, by the way, bore the same name, Abū Saʿīd Ibn Jamāhir, as the India merchant whom we have met above (p. 133), as having had an affair with a slave girl.[104]

To repeat, Jewish law did not grant the emancipator any rights whatsoever on the person, progeny, or property of the slave emancipated by him. Here too, however, the influence of environment, or perhaps social habits, was stronger than the written law. The Geniza has preserved a long and interesting query addressed to Abraham Maimonides with the following story. A freedwoman in a little town in Lower Egypt at her death had left money to her friends who did not want to accept it, but who intended to turn it over to the community. Meanwhile the son of the master who had emancipated her (the son himself is called in the letter "her master"!), a respected and popular figure in the town, had become ruined in an affair of tax-farming and laid claim on the money. The head of the local community was very anxious to accede to this request, in particular as the claimant threatened to apply to a Muslim court in case it was refused. In his hastily scribbled marginal answer, the Nagid states that the applicant had not the slightest rights on the estate of a person emancipated by his father, of course, but there was no objection to its being turned over to him, if the women to whom it was given consented to such a procedure—in other words, the Nagid, too, favored an action in line with the generally accepted notions.[105] In popular usage, Jewish freedmen and even their sons were described as mawlās, "attached to so-and-so," but the law would not recognize such designations.[106] In a court record from Fustat, dated June 28, 1080, the freedman Mubārak (who had become a successful businessman) was first characterized as the mawlā of Joseph b. Joshiah, a person known from other documents, then the Arabic term was deleted and replaced by the Hebrew "freed by." [107]

As far as we are able to discern, there were no legal inhibitions or discriminations against emancipated slaves. We see them marry free women, concluding partnerships with freemen involving considerable sums, and appearing as attorneys in court.[108] A former slave married to a freeman would be asked by a court to give her consent to her husband's selling of a house, just as any other wife.[109] The emancipated slaves were imbued with the social and religious notions of the community that they joined. A characteristic instance in this respect is the will of the freedman Bundār (from the beginning of the eleventh century), who assigned one-fourth of his estate to the poor of his town, one-fourth to the poor of the Holy City Jerusalem, "of the Rabbanite persuasion with exclusion of the Karaites," while the rest fell to his heirs. One-fourth amounted to 139 ṭarīs, or Sicilian quarter dinars, by no means a negligible sum, since the government had appropriated

most of the estate left by Bundār.[110] Another freedman appears twice in lists of contributors to a public charity (in the thirteenth century).[111]

Was emancipation always a blessing for the person concerned? In answer to this question we can only state that the Geniza contains lists in which freed persons appear as receivers of alms and clothing from the public chest. Slaves do so also; perhaps this happened when their masters died without having set them free.[112]

The slaves of the rulers who formed the prototype of the slaves employed as business agents by the middle class also make their appearance in the Geniza papers. A typical representative of this group was Rayḥān, "Basil," who, in 1141, bought silk for the government, an activity about which we hear much in our papers, and at the same time was so influential that he was approached to procure one caliphal rescript for a private person and another for the Christians and Jews of Alexandria in general. The latter was intended to protect the minority population against the encroachments of the poll-tax officials in a city that throughout our period (as in classical times) was notorious for its fanaticism and unruliness.[113]

This study shows that the female slaves formed a vital section of the working population, insofar as they provided domestic help, a type of work shunned by free women. We, with electricity and gas and countless gadgets at our disposal, can easily forego the services of a maid. But in the Geniza period, as in the time of our own grandparents, a larger household could hardly do without domestic help. This explains why female slavery looms so large in the Geniza papers. With respect to the males, one must, of course, bear in mind that a slave was obliged to do any service for his master, menial and other. A poet praising his slave for joining him in his literary pursuits and taking care of his library, describes him also as an excellent cook and as a most efficient keeper of his wardrobe.[114] Similarly, we have seen that slaves accompanying their masters on their extended travels served them not only as business agents, but also in any other capacity, and simple domestics of male sex are not entirely absent from the Geniza records. Still, in the society reflected in these records, male slaves were far rarer than females, and were not mainly engaged in manual work, but belonged, more or less, to the world of commerce and finance.

CHAPTER III

# *The World of Commerce and Finance*

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE: *Periods and Countries Prominent in the Business Documents of the Geniza*

"Of the organization of trade before the twelfth century, not much, if anything, is known." In the light of this statement, made recently by a most competent expert, the information provided by the Cairo Geniza documents must be regarded as particularly welcome.[1] Most of the Geniza letters, court records, and accounts related to the Mediterranean trade come from the eleventh century. There are hundreds of them, and many are extensive and full of variegated and valuable data. To be sure, their scope is limited. Most of them originated from Tunisian merchants living in Egypt or other countries of the Muslim East, or who were still in their homeland. These merchants, however, roamed about the whole Mediterranean basin, from Spain to Syria and Palestine, and traded eagerly with the Rūm, the Europeans. Thus the organization and technique of commerce revealed by the Geniza papers certainly has some bearing on the economic history of Europe as well.[2]

The Geniza material regarding the India trade, which is not treated in this book, covers mainly the years 1080–1160. Thus it overlaps only in part the period during which the Mediterranean commerce is richly illustrated in the Geniza.[3] The late Fatimid and the Ayyubid epochs (1160–1250) are represented mostly by local Egyptian documents, only a sprinkling of them pertaining to the international trade.

How is this uneven distribution of Geniza material on the history of commerce to be explained? Various factors, independent of each other, might have been at work. During the eleventh century, most of the middle-class Jews still lived in Fustat, or Old Cairo, where the synagogue with the Geniza chamber was located. In the first half of the twelfth century, well-to-do families had two homes, one in Fustat and one in New Cairo, the seat of the government. By the end of that century, most of the more affluent merchants seem to have moved to the new city, and they normally had no opportunity to discard their writings in the Old Cairo lumber room whose contents have come down to us.

It is also possible that only restricted circles of people had religious scruples with regard to the burning of business papers written in Hebrew characters. As the Geniza proves, such notions were definitely held by the Tunisian Jews of the eleventh century, as well as by the India traders of the twelfth, most of whom were of Maghrebi origin. As to the third period referred to above, the later twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, most documents are somehow connected with the rabbinical court of Old Cairo, which had its seat in the synagogue to which the Geniza was attached.

Finally, the vicissitudes of economic history might themselves be reflected in the number and nature of commercial papers preserved in the Geniza. During the eleventh century, despite the rise of European maritime power and the encroachment of the Italian cities, the Mediterranean trade still was largely in Islamic hands. Thus it is natural that Arabic-speaking Jews should have a fair share in this activity. During the twelfth century European naval supremacy became paramount. Therefore, one understands why Jewish middle-class merchants sought an outlet for their enterprising spirit in the commerce with the countries of the Indian Ocean. By the beginning of the thirteenth century, the powerful association of the so-called Kārimīs made it difficult for individual merchants with limited means to participate in the ventures of the India trade.[4] This would explain why the Geniza material of the turn of the thirteenth century is mainly confined to the local Egyptian scene. These suppositions are offered here only with much reservation. Moreover, in conformity with the general character of this book, primarily the social aspects of medieval business and finance are discussed here. The intricate and captivating problems of economic and juridical history posed by the Geniza papers must be left to experts specializing in these fields.

## A. THE MERCHANTS AND THEIR EMPLOYEES

### 1. TYPES OF BUSINESSMEN

The time-honored Arabic term for businessman, *tājir*, which is derived from the Akkadian, is not common in the Geniza documents and serves in them mostly as a designation for the "big merchant." The very fact that they make mention of such epithets as "X, the Jewish tājir," "Y, the Yemenite tājir," "Z, the Baghdadi tājir," proves that only comparatively few persons were styled as such.[1] The designation "businessmen," *ahl al-ḥawā'ij*, also was applied only to the upper crust of the profession.[2]

Al-Dimashqī's twelfth-century handbook on the technique of commerce divides the merchants into three categories: the "hoarder," who stores the goods and sells them when prices are high; the "peregrinator," who transports wares from one country to another; and the

"shipper," who is himself stationary, but sends shipments abroad.[3] Al-Dimashqī, however, was concerned only with the tājir group. The reality of commerce was far more diversified and the types participating in it far more numerous.

*Producers and dealers.*—The lower stratum of people engaged in commerce was formed by the great mass of craftsmen who sold their own products and occasionally also those made by others (see preceding chapter). In most cases the Arabic terms for a profession do not indicate whether the persons concerned were engaged mainly in the manufacture or in the sale of a product. Thus a *jabbān* could be either a seller or a producer of cheese; a *labbān* could be either a man milking sheep (which were kept within the city walls) or engaged mainly, or perhaps even exclusively, in selling milk. This ambiguity exists not only for us who read these ancient papers, but prevailed at the time the terms were in use. Therefore, when necessary, the profession of a person mentioned had to be defined expressly. Thus we find in a list of contributors to a charity "X, who sells soap" immediately after "Y, the soap-maker," or at the side of the term "mat-maker," which often merely designated a merchant selling mats, the clumsier expression "the one who makes mats." But the very fact that the ambiguous term was used in the overwhelming number of cases seems to indicate that a seller of a locally produced commodity also had something to do with its production.[4]

*Retailers and wholesalers.*—The distinction between retailers and wholesalers was well developed in the society represented in the Geniza papers, but not along the same lines as in our own time. The trading artisan, naturally, was a retailer. The wholesale textile merchants often sold single pieces too, as is evidenced by their accounts. The reason for this was the relatively high value of each piece. In addition, we read about many clothiers who clearly were retailers as were, of course, the traders in second-hand garments. The modern American or European, who buys new clothing every year, can hardly appreciate the scope and importance of this medieval trade. A fine textile was a work of art, cherished regardless of its having been worn before. A chief pastime of well-to-do ladies was not only shopping (to be sure: for yarns, fabrics, and clothing, not for food for the household), but also selling whatever they wished to dispense with from their wardrobe. No wonder, then, that the dealers in second-hand clothes in Old Cairo had a bazaar of their own.[5]

A situation similar to that of the textile branch prevailed in the second largest field of commercial activities, that of drugs, chemicals, spices, and perfumes. The wholesale "perfumer" or "seller of potions" also served partly as retailer, and for the same reason as did the textile merchant: quite a number of the commodities carried by him were expensive and out of reach of the smaller "druggist." Many, perhaps most, of the "perfumers," "potion sellers," and "apothecaries" men-

tioned in the Geniza were retailers, and their activities are well illustrated by their correspondence and legal documents.[6]

The real domain of the retailer was the trade in foodstuffs and household requirements. This trade was divided into different branches and each store had to obtain a license according to the main products it carried. Two Geniza contracts refer to partnerships in stores "licensed for the sale of oil and legumes." One, dated January, 1104, is particularly instructive for the scope and financial capacity of such a retail shop. The investor provided 9 dinars in cash, while his partner contributed goods of the same value, specified as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | jars of linseed oil, worth | 4 dinars |
| 4 | containers of olives, worth | 1 dinar |
| 3 | glass vessels (with their baskets) of lemon juice, worth | 1-¼ dinars |
| 18 | empty glass vessels, worth | 2 dinars |
| | Scales for pounds, 4 leaden pounds, a peddlar's board with its scales and their weights, worth | ¾ dinar |
| | Total | 9 dinars |

The capital was needed for replenishing the stock. Both partners contributed the work (presumably one mainly occupied with selling and the other with buying), and it was expected that both could make a livelihood from such an investment.[7]

"The shopkeeper extends credit." This maxim of the second century A.D.[8] held good also in the period illustrated by the Geniza. In this respect there seems to have been no great difference between the retailer and the wholesaler, and, even with the former, buying on credit obviously was the rule. The Geniza has preserved batches of five, ten, and twenty orders, respectively, in which shopkeepers are advised to deliver specified quantities of certain commodities to the bearers. After assembling a certain number of such orders, the shopkeeper presumably returned them to the senders for payment. This would explain why such orders have been found together in round numbers. The five orders referred to above are written on tiny pieces of vellum. In them the shopkeeper is requested to deliver to the bearer quantities of oil, soap, wood, various vegetables, lemon, and sugar, and, in addition, small sums of cash.[9] The batches of ten and twenty are addressed by one merchant to two different *sharābīs*, or "sellers of juices," all containing orders for juices of lemon, pomegranates, or apples, rose oil, potions made of a combination of honey and vinegar (not an invention of the twentieth century!) with or without taste of pomegranates, as well as some preserves.[10] Many single orders from the hand of the same merchant have been traced in different collections, among them three to the same store for one pound of linseed oil.[11]

Accounts of a shopkeeper in a provincial town from the year 1150 reveal that in some instances payment in weekly installments was expected. In most cases, however, terms for payment are not indicated. Similarly, in two accounts of wine merchants the customers are listed as having received jugs of wine, or as owing certain sums of money, but without specification of when payment was due. Still another list simply states: "Sold," followed by a great number of names, including such common names as Jacob, or such general designations as "the physician." The item sold is described only by quantity (mostly ½ or 1 pound). Thus we must assume that in retail, as was the case in wholesale, the period for which credit was granted was fixed by generally accepted usages.[12]

A few types of retailers are designated by special terms, such as the grocer, *baqqāl* (they had a special bazaar, repeatedly referred to), or the keeper of a grain store, *fāmī*, often mentioned in the Geniza.[13] It may be remarked in passing that the "seller" par excellence, *bayyā*, was usually not a retailer in the technical sense of the word, but a culinary specialist who himself sold the delicacies he prepared. Sometimes he is defined by his main line, such as "seller of boiled chick peas." Thus this ubiquitous profession belongs in the food industry rather than in commerce.[14]

As a rule, just as the language of our sources uses the same words for the producer of a commodity and its distributor, thus it uses the same words for the retailer and the wholesaler. A *zayyāt*, or "seller of oil," could be a modest grocer of the type we have already met, who deals in linseed oil and a few other commodities, or he could be a great importer of precious olive oil from Tunisia. The term *sukkarī* might designate the proprietor of a large sugar factory worth thousands of dinars, or a small storekeeper who specialized in the sale of sugar. There is a deathbed declaration made by a sukkarī who had taken ill suddenly (and who died the day after making his declaration). In it he records having received sugar worth 6 dinars from a sukkarī whom he refers to with the honorary epithet "the elder" (not applied to the dying man) and, to whom he had paid one-third in cash; and he refers to still another sukkarī from whom he received sugar valued at 3 dinars. He himself sold much smaller amounts.[15]

Yet it would be rash to conclude from the ambiguity of terms that in actual practice the distinction between retailer and wholesaler was entirely blurred. The society reflected in the Geniza records distinguished very clearly between "the beggars," as the great merchants called the small shopkeepers, and "the sons of houses," the members of respectable business firms.[16] A mere glance at a Geniza letter—its script, its arrangement, its subject matter—is sufficient to show us from which of the two classes it emanated. Naturally, the letters of the wholesalers are far more numerous, more extensive, more coherent and

generally also more interesting. Still, our sources have preserved ample material to enable future research to depict in greater detail the world of the retailer.

*Merchants' diversification and specialization.*—In a letter addressed to the flax bourse in Alexandria, a Maghrebi merchant sojourning temporarily in Būṣīr, the great Egyptian flax center, gives the following instructions to a business correspondent:

> Please accept delivery of the proceeds from the two bales [of flax] which I sent to Maghreb. If it is cash, send it on to the elder Abū Sa'īd in Old Cairo [who would forward it to the writer]. If it is wax, or white lead, or vegetable oil, or *Āmidī* cloth, or dark-blue wrappings, or hides, or oiled shoes, or gilded shoes, or red silk—sell everything in Alexandria. If it is silk with patterns, send it on in the shipment going to my master, the elder Abū Sa'īd, or with any one of our friends. If it is olive oil or wool, leave it, until the air will become cooler.

The very specific character of half of the twelve alternatives mentioned suggests that the writer of our letter had instructed his business correspondent in Tunisia to buy for him any of these commodities if he did not choose to send cash.[17]

This example of almost bizarre diversity of goods handled by one and the same merchant could be multiplied ad infinitum. If we take an average case, a businessman from whose hand we have ten letters written during a reasonably short period, we find that, around 1100, Isaac Nīsābūrī, a Persian (as is proved both by his family name and his Arab style) resident in Alexandria, dealt in the following commodities:

1. Dyeing plants (saffron, imported from Tunisia, and brazilwood, exported from the Indies to the Maghreb).
2. Medical and culinary herbs (scammony, imported from Syria, cubeb brought from Socotra).
3. Glass (sold for another merchant).
4. Silk (by far the most common item).
5. Other textiles (robes, made of brocade and scarfs).
6. Corals (imported from Rūm, that is, Christian Europe, and North Africa).
7. Perfumes (ambergris—the Atlantic variety—and musk).
8. Wax (from Tunisia).
9. Millstones (from Syria).
10. A variety of cloths and household goods, which seem, however, to be items given as favors to business friends rather than articles of commerce.

Nahray b. Nissīm, a wholesale merchant of high standing, whose activities we are able to follow for a period of fifty years (1045–1096) and whose archive contains over two hundred and fifty papers emanat-

ing from him, or addressed or referring to him, was active in the following fields (arranged approximately according to the volume of his business in each branch):

1. Flax, exported from Egypt to Tunisia and Sicily.
2. Silk (from Spain and Sicily) and other fabrics, from Syrian or European (Rūm) cotton to North African felt, and textiles of all descriptions, from robes to bedcovers.
3. Olive oil, soap and wax from Tunisia, occasionally also from Palestine and Syria.
4. Oriental spices, such as pepper, cinnamon, and clove, sent from Egypt to the West.
5. Dyeing, tanning, and varnishing materials such as brazilwood, lacquer and indigo (sent from East to West); sumac and gallnuts (from Syria to Egypt); saffron (from Tunisia to the East).
6. Metals (copper, iron, lead, mercury, tin, silver ingots), all West to East.
7. Books (Bible codexes, Talmuds, legal and edifying literature, grammars, and Arabic books).
8. Aromatics, perfumes, and gums (aloe, ambergris, camphor, frankincense, gum arabic, mastic gum, musk, betel leaves).
9. Jewelry and semiprecious stones (gems, pearls, carnelians, turquoises, onyxes, and the like).
10. Materials (such as beads, "pomegranate" strings, coral, cowrie shells, lapis lazuli, and tortoiseshell) used for ornaments and trinkets, items that loomed large in his papers.
11. Chemicals (alkali, alum, antimony, arsenic, bamboo crystals, borax, naphtha, sulfur, starch, vitriol).
12. Foodstuffs, such as sugar, exported from Egypt, or dried fruits, imported from Syria.
13. Hides and leather. Also furs and shoes. All coming from, or through, Tunisia and Sicily.
14. Pitch, an important article.
15. Varia, such as palm fiber, and items not yet identified with certainty.

On top of all this, Nahray b. Nissīm was a banker, as is evident from the accounts written by him as well as from his correspondence. During certain periods this must have been his main occupation.

The list by no means exhausts the types of commodities referred to in Nahray's letters. They contain many other items, such as orders for paper, for example. In view of the quantities specified, however, it seems that he needed the paper personally in his threefold capacity of scholar, merchant, and banker. The same applies to other items, such as wheat and honey, which he probably used for his household rather than for his business.[18]

One wonders how one person alone could successfully handle such an enormous variety of commodities, especially in a period that did not

know the notion of fixed prices and where even the contents of a single package of the same item could obtain different prices according to quality and other circumstances. The technical knowledge required for such dealings would surpass the capacity of the most qualified man. Business was organized to solve this puzzle: because of widespread mutual assistance, a merchant was able to enlist the aid of an expert or specialist whenever he undertook to buy or to sell a commodity with which he was not familiar. He had to diversify his activities and to accept orders from many different categories of customers in order to spread the risk and to meet the fluctuation of the market. The difficulties caused by the lack of quick communication and other circumstances contributed to the need to diversify. These matters will occupy us in some of the following sections.

Extreme diversification was by no means the only form of the wholesale business. It seems that the term tājir, which we already know as a designation for a big merchant, was reserved for those enormously versatile men who dealt in a great variety of goods. For we find the term side by side with those of specialists, as when a business correspondent of Nahray, writing to him from Jerusalem, describes how he took pains to "sell" the latter's Sicilian quarter dinars: "I left no tājir, wool merchant or clothier to whom I did not offer them." [19]

Bynames (such as *al-nīlī*, "the indigo merchant") and family names (such as *Ibn al-tammār*, "the son of the date merchant") derived from specific branches of commerce, as well as the high degree of specialization expressed in them, indicate that concentration on a limited line of business must have been very common. Such names are particularly frequent in the domains of agricultural products of the Mediterranean area, Oriental imports, dyestuffs, and of luxury goods, but are found in practically every field. A few examples suffice to illustrate: (*a*) distributors of acorns, fennel, gallnuts, lupines, sesame, or seeds in general; (*b*) dealers in ambergris, camphor, odoriferous wood, lacquer, mace, or (Chinese) rhubarb; (*c*) sellers of antimony, henna, saffron, "paints" (*aṣbāghī*), or "dyestuff" (*khiḍābī*, by which was meant mainly indigo); (*d*) merchants in gems, unperforated pearls, gold nuggets, silver ingots, or corals.[20] Not included here are the many names referring to textiles and other industrial products because the Arabic terms do not reveal whether the person involved traded in the commodity, produced it, or did both.

How far does the evidence of accounts and business letters confirm the phenomenon of specialization, so widely attested to by names? Since the Geniza is not an orderly archive preserving the full records of any merchant, but a shambles of fortuitous remnants, we are, of course, not in a position to answer this question with absolute certainty. We find large accounts, entirely devoted to one branch, such as flax, articles of clothing, or banking transactions. We cannot, however, conclude from this evidence that the firms from which those accounts

emanated limited their activities to the objects listed. Nahray b. Nissīm, the most versatile of all merchants known to us from the Geniza, left us several documents that were exclusively bank statements, and in one account for a partner which consisted of fifty entries, two concerned cash, one mentioned a shipment of corals, but all the rest specified pieces of clothing.[21] Longer business letters rarely, if ever, are confined to one item. Still, it is often evident that their writers had one article as their main business, while all the rest represented sidelines.

The volume or excellence of the trader's prime commodity was clearly the reason for his byname, which often stuck to his descendants, even when they were engaged in an entirely different business. Thus "the son of the date merchant," so frequently mentioned in Nahray's papers, appears in them exclusively as a dealer in clothing. "The son of the seller of odoriferous wood" and "the son of the lacquer merchant" are often mentioned in letters from the eleventh century, but as shipowners, not as dealers in the commodities suggested by their family names. This question of diversification and specialization is treated more fully in the study of the trade routes and the wares carried on them.[22]

*Itinerant and stationary merchants.*—"During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the European 'merchants' continued to be peregrinators, moving constantly about in unending pursuit of profit. They and their servants still accompanied their goods either by land or by sea."[23] In the countries bordering the Mediterranean on the east, south, and west, the situation was markedly different. The Muslim handbook of commerce mentioned earlier divides merchants into hoarders, travelers and stationary shippers.[24] Of the three definitions used, only the second, *rakkāḍ*, literally "runner," appears in the Geniza as a technical term, but in the more limited sense of traders moving from one little town of the Egyptian Rīf to another selling textiles. "I bought forty pounds of silk from 'runners' in Minyat Ziftā," writes a merchant around 1140.[25] Seventy years or so earlier a merchant from Tinnīs, the great linen center, informed a business friend by letter that he was leaving for the Rīf for the duration of twenty days to sell silk. Numerous legal documents and letters refer to this type of business trip.[26]

These smaller traders of comparatively limited scope are to be differentiated from the itinerant merchants engaged in international commerce. It is the latter who provide the major portion of the business correspondence preserved in the Geniza—which is natural, since they had the need and the occasion to write letters more than others. They, too, were not all of one type, but were roughly divided into two groups. The first may appropriately be characterized as commuters, for we find them moving incessantly between Tunisia, Sicily, and Egypt, say, or between Egypt and the far West (Morocco and Spain), or Egypt and Palestine and Syria. References to their travels are abun-

dant, as well as remarks like: "This year I shall stay put and not travel," or: "It is already midsummer and you have not yet come." The other group may be called migrants. They were merchants who migrated to another country and stayed there for some years, doing business with their family and friends back home. Many, as the Geniza shows, settled in their new domicile, others went back and were replaced by younger members of the same family or same circle of merchants.

Two reasons must account for the prevalence of travel in medieval trade. The shortcomings and hazards of transport required that a proprietor of merchandise either accompany it in person or entrust it to an employee or business friend. A captain or a sailor sometimes took care of shipments, but, as a rule, only when these were of limited volume and value.[27]

The most compelling reason for travel, however, was the technique of trade, the belief so often repeated in the Geniza letters, that "one who is present sees what one who is absent cannot see." [28] Personal, intimate knowledge of prospective customers as well as of the producers or providers of goods to be purchased was regarded as the foremost prerequisite of successful business. Our letters demonstrate that as a rule the veteran merchants back in Qayrawān knew every customer in Old Cairo who bought the goods they dispatched. And they were familiar with the localities and offices where flax, the staple grown in many different places in Egypt, was bought on their account to be sent to Tunisia.

The coming and going of the itinerant merchants determined the rhythm of life—and not only in the metropolitan cities. "All people [i.e., the foreign merchants] have returned the stores [rented by them for the business season] and are leaving," writes a Tunisian sojourning in Old Cairo.[29] "The synagogue is desolate, for the Maghrebis have left," we read in a letter from the same city.[30] A businessman in al-Mahdiyya reports: "Flax is being sought after this year only at the time of departure [namely of the merchants who sell it in the West] or of the Andalusians [meaning the arrival of the prospective purchasers]." [31] A man, writing from Būsh (about 75 miles south of Cairo) to his mother in Alexandria, remarks that many caravans are commuting between Alexandria and Būsh for the purchase of flax.[32] We shall come back to these peregrinators in our chapter on Travel and Seafaring, pages 273 ff., below.

On the other hand, al-Dimashqī's division of merchants into travelers and those who stay put and send shipments with others is fully borne out by the testimony of the Geniza. The evidence it yields may be summarized as follows: the majority of the *writers* of business letters were itinerant merchants, but most of those to whom they were *addressed* were stationary. Naturally, the latter had more opportunity to dispose of their correspondence in the Geniza chamber. But the

references contained in letters and documents also prove that many of the most prominent merchants were sedentary and conducted their business through correspondence and representatives.

Nahray b. Nissīm, whose multilateral activities have been discussed above, traveled from Qayrawān to Old Cairo in 1045 and subsequently returned on one or more occasions to his home country. Moreover, he visited Jerusalem several times, as well as the major towns of Syria and Lebanon. He frequented the flax-growing centers in Egypt, where he befriended the Muslim and Jewish local authorities. The great majority of letters addressed to him was sent to Old Cairo, however, and the contents of his correspondence also reveal that during most of his life he lived in that town.

During the first quarter of the eleventh century, a great merchant called Joseph Ibn ʿAwkal loomed in the Geniza records as the predominant public figure. He transmitted the donations and queries from the Jewish communities all over North Africa to the Jewish academies of Baghdad, and the letters, treatises, and books sent by the latter he forwarded to the communities or persons for whom they were destined. (But not before having them copied. For this reason, the Geniza contains so many fragments of these writings.) All communal, personal, and business letters addressed or referring to him assume that he always lived in Old Cairo. None of the many letters allude to any meeting with him outside this city. His correspondence reveals that the dispatch from Alexandria of most voluminous and high-priced goods sent overseas was not supervised by him in person, but entrusted to agents or associates. Thus Ibn ʿAwkal is a perfect example of Dimashqī's third type of merchant, the one who does not accompany his wares but lets them be handled by others.

It is also true that medium-sized wholesale business could be transacted by stationary merchants. The merchants whose role as social-service officers and "trustees of the court" is described in *Mediterranean Society*, Volume II, chapter v, section B, were of lesser stature than Ibn ʿAwkal but still very influential in the community, and their business was many sided and geographically of a wide scope. All the same, their entire correspondence, as well as many court records, shows them invariably as residents of Old Cairo.

More or less permanent residence was particularly required of those merchants who served as legal and commercial representatives of others. This most important office of the *wakīl al-tujjār*, or representatives of the merchants, is discussed on pages 186–192, below. The sedentary character of such a wakīl is here illustrated by the story of an eleventh-century merchant known to us through a remarkable series of letters and documents.

Judah b. Moses Ibn Sighmār was the scion of a great family of scholars, judges, and merchants. In the summer of 1048 he traveled from his native city of Qayrawān to Egypt. We find him also in

Tripoli, Lebanon. For it was common practice for Tunisian merchants traveling to the East to visit the markets of Lebanon and Syria (and to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem). Ibn Sighmār, however, settled in Old Cairo and married into a local family, "famous in East and West." He acted as legal representative of his Tunisian countrymen, and documents to this effect, bearing dates as widely separated from each other as 1055 and 1098, have been found. A letter from Mazara, Sicily, the longest business paper I have seen, and another from Alexandria, designate him as al-wakīl, *the* representative. The letter from Alexandria is addressed to his office, and most probably also warehouse, in the Lane of the Leatherbottle Makers in Old Cairo.[33]

Ibn Sighmār must have been successful and munificent, as the honorary titles conferred on him indicate, and as is confirmed by the following statement found in a letter from Jerusalem: "In His grace God has brought Abū Zikrī [Ibn Sighmār's byname], the member of the academy, from the West, so that he should be in Miṣr [Old Cairo] a support for everyone coming from anywhere: from Iraq, Syria and Palestine, the West, and the countries of the Rūm [Europe], being kind to them, spending on them his fortunes, and using his high social position (*jāh*) for their best. May God preserve the wealth He has given him and increase it and let him witness the joy [i.e., the wedding] of his son."[34]

Letters addressed or referring to Judah Ibn Sighmār show him as active in Old Cairo, and it is characteristic that thus far not a single instance of an exchange of written communication between him and his contemporary Nahray b. Nissīm has been accounted for (although he is repeatedly mentioned in the latter's correspondence). The reason is self-evident. During most of their lives the two men were in the same city. Once, in 1075, Ibn Sighmār visited his native city of Qayrawān, and there is one letter, sent around 1068, addressed to him while in Alexandria. But this very letter contains a passage that proves travel was for him the exception rather than the rule. For it was from his wife, who then was expecting her third child and whose firstborn was old enough to serve as his mother's scribe, and in her letter she says: "I cannot grasp that I should be in one city and you in another." It is also noteworthy that Ibn Sighmār had a slave who acted as his business agent overseas.[35]

The stationary merchants thus far discussed were all based in Old Cairo. This circumstance is not so only because the Geniza chamber was found in that city. As we shall see, Cairo during the eleventh century was the exclusive metropolis of commerce and finance in Egypt, with Alexandria trailing far behind. But there also were such merchants in Alexandria, the Geniza reveals, who, besides doing business for themselves, acted as shipping agents for others. In addition to Isaac Nīsābūrī (see p. 153, above), we know of at least four of his contemporaries whose considerable correspondence shows them to be residents of

Alexandria.[36] It should be noted that the contents alone, and not the number of letters and references, prove that the person concerned was mainly or solely active in that city. For most of the letters coming from Alexandria were written by peregrinators.

*Brokers, auctioneers, and other middlemen.*—In addition to the five types of merchant described, namely the retailer, the small itinerant of limited scope, the commuter between one country and another (who normally was active in many branches), the specialist in one choice commodity, and the sedentary big or medium-sized merchant (who often served as representative for foreigners), we come to another group: the brokers and other middlemen.

In his delightful book *Travels in Persia,* which describes life in that country during the seventeenth century, Sir John Chardin has this to say concerning the respectable merchants: "They make no bargains themselves directly; and there is no public place of exchange in their towns; the trade is carried on by stock jobbers." The Mediterranean merchants of the High Middle Ages attended to their dealings in person to a far greater extent than did their Persian colleagues of the seventeenth century, according to Sir John's testimony. Still, the services of middlemen (and -women) were widely used. We hear much *about* these people in the Geniza papers, but have comparatively few documents from them themselves. This is natural, since their transactions usually were conducted directly and orally.

Throughout the centuries our sources speak of three types of middlemen, although the distinction among them is not always evident to us.

First comes the time-honored term *simsār,* or agent, borrowed by the Arabs from the Persians and going back perhaps to the ancient Sumerians. From the Arabs, the word came into Italian and German (*sensale, Sensal*) and into several other European languages. The Geniza and cognate sources make mention of various kinds of simsārs. There was the real estate broker, confining himself, as modern realtors often do, to certain neighborhoods.[37] In one Geniza document such a person is called *al-wāsiṭa,* literally the middleman.[38] A simsār could specialize in textiles, having no store of his own, but receiving large quantities of goods on commission.[39] In a document dated February 26, 1225, two members of an orphans' court betake themselves to "the bazaar of the clothiers" and sell there certain garments through "a great simsār." This seems to indicate that the latter had his fixed seat in that locality. By coincidence, another document written on the same day and dealing with the same matter has been preserved. Here, the "great simsār" is simply referred to as *munādī,* or market crier, auctioneer, and in both documents the compensation paid to him is called *dilāla,* or broker's fee.[40]

*Dallāl,* or broker, is indeed the most comprehensive designation for the group of persons with whom we are concerned here, and dilāla is

the general word for commission, occurring innumerable times in the accounts found in the Geniza.[41] A dallāl could be a wealthy person, participating with a large sum in an overseas undertaking, or a miserable broker earning a few dirhems a day. The term munādī, or auctioneer, as we have seen, could even be applied to a big agent, but usually was confined to persons who were actually engaged in hawking at market. Sometimes the locality in which such a man was active was specified in his designation, such as "the crier in the bazaar of the wool merchants," "the crier in the bazaar of the Exchange (Alexandria, 1132)," "the perfumery broker in Fustat." In most of our documents, however, munādī, as the name of a profession, is not defined more closely, while it could be said of any merchant or artisan that he "cried out" (we would say "advertised") a certain commodity during a certain period.[42]

*Female brokers.*—As the Geniza documents show, female brokers must have been of considerable economic importance. The ladies of the Muslim upper class were not allowed by their husbands to visit the bazaars of the clothiers, or at least to visit them as often and as long as they would have liked. Therefore, women agents frequented the harems and offered there the precious textiles. In a contract dated March 23, 1138, a big tax-farmer cedes his rights on the taxes on the sale and dyeing of silks with regard to a certain quarter of Old Cairo. He reserves for himself, however, the right to do business with seven women, four of whom bore out-and-out Muslim names; two of these brokers are mentioned together with their (female) partners. In a detailed day-to-day account of a textile merchant and in a short note by the same, there appear another eight women taking specified fabrics on credit or paying for them. Here, too, most of the names are Muslim.[43] We have even found a female Jewish broker dealing in Hebrew books.[44]

The most frequently mentioned woman in all the Geniza records is a *dallāla*, or broker, who, to judge from her will, must have been very successful in her dealings. We tell her story in *Mediterranean Society*, Volume III, chapter ix.

## 2. THE EMPLOYEES

It was regarded as degrading, even by the small craftsman, to be employed by someone else. For a man embracing the noble profession of merchant it was a disaster. Most characteristically for the notion of employee our sources regularly use the word ṣabī, "boy," "young man," even if he was already so advanced in years as to be given the honorary title "the elder." The idea was that only the transitory state of apprenticeship was commensurate with the respectability of a free man, while permanent dependence was deemed unbearable.[1]

Yet, the bigger merchants could not do without a staff. First, they needed clerks for their correspondence and accounts. This was espe-

cially necessary since letters and the accounts accompanying them often were sent in a number of copies. In one case we read about five copies of each of thirteen letters forwarded from Alexandria to Tunisia via five different boats, and another case of one letter in four copies also sent from Alexandria to Tunisia.[2]

Merchants often wrote their correspondence in their own hand, especially when they were abroad with no clerk close by, or when the secrecy of the subject matter made the employment of help inadvisable. It was not customary to sign letters, but the handwriting of a great many merchants is known to us through their signatures in legal documents, through postscripts they added to the letters of friends, through introducing themselves by name, and in other ways. It is certain that larger business houses employed one or two or even three clerks, for we possess letters from them written in two to four different scripts. We have direct evidence of this. In a court record from Old Cairo referring to the years 1040–1041, four visitors from Tunisia testified to the authenticity of various business letters, written in Arabic characters, emanating from one Ibn al-Majjānī of Qayrawān. They did so by asserting that they knew the handwriting of the two clerks "who used to write the letters to the merchants for Ibn al-Majjānī."[3]

The employment of scribes by business houses must have been of a fairly permanent character. As stated, it was not customary to sign letters. The name of the sender appeared only on the address, namely its left upper corner, or was merely indicated by such phrases as "from your friend," or "from one grateful for your kindness." The recipient therefore had only one means of ascertaining the authenticity of a letter: his familiarity with the handwriting of his correspondent or of the latter's clerk. In exceptional cases (presumably when a new scribe was employed) the letter itself would be written by the scribe, while the chief of the business house would write the address.[4] This procedure may seem peculiar to us, but was natural in a civilization that had the proverb: "The address of a letter is like the face of its sender." Some sources indicate that the scribes were paid by piece. We do not know whether this was a general practice, although very likely it was.

A merchant needed help even when he had only one store or office. If he was not assisted by a partner or a relative, he had an employee or a slave. If he was the proprietor of several business premises, such assistance was indispensable. In the contract on the conveying of the rights of a tax-farmer (mentioned on p. 161) the latter stipulated that the contracting party was not entitled to sell silk to "the young men" employed in his own stores. Incidentally, this stipulation shows that the employees, in addition to working for their master, were entitled to do business on their own account. This must have been the established custom as is evident from all relevant documents.

Compensation of the employee undoubtedly varied widely according

to the status of both sides and the nature and value of the help provided. At the lowest level we read of a daily wage averaging 2 to 3 dirhems. In the example given on page 96, above, it is not indicated whether the employee was engaged in manual or clerical work. In a highly interesting account submitted in 1046 to an employer, the writer lists his living expenses (approximately 1-½ dinars per month), which seems to imply that these were borne by the employer, for sundry personal expenses appear in the account as debits on the writer. But there is no indication in this, or in any other such account, of the existence of a salary.[5] In two almost identical letters, one to his parents and one to his sister, a young man from Qayrawān reports that he intended to take service with a great Tunisian merchant in Old Cairo, but had heard that he "was mean and niggardly, employing a man for one year and letting him be without work for ten." Here, too, where we would expect it, there is no clue to the amount of remuneration.[6] We must conclude that the relationships between employer and employee were regulated through the same legal instruments as those between independent merchants, namely partnership, commenda, commission, or mutual service, with the proviso that the employer promised to provide work, while the employee undertook to follow the instructions of his master.

This state of affairs is learned from business letters in which the correspondents appear to be engaged with each other in regular commercial relations, but in which one side gives orders to the other. Thus we read in a long letter sent from Qayrawān to Egypt on August 9, 1048, which also contains detailed accounts about transactions between the writer and the addressee: "I was happy to learn from your letter that you are coming this year. I *allowed* you to stay last year only because then you had not many goods." Later on in the letter, the "master" asks the "pupil" to buy certain choice textiles in Old Cairo for a business friend of his and to give this order preference over all his own affairs. Finally, he instructs him to do some errands for his wife in the Egyptian capital.[7] In a court record dated 1039 and dealing with such a relationship (the enterprise concerned was the ritual killing of animals), the senior partner explained that the junior was not permitted to do anything except on his command.[8]

In the two similar letters from the young Tunisian to his parents and sister, in which he expressed his hesitation over accepting a post as employee, he also made the following remark: "Moreover, I am afraid that I would have to travel too much in his service and thus be cut off from you." In the Geniza it is indeed from merchants in their capacity as traveling agents that we hear most about commercial employment. Goods and cash were entrusted to such young men whether they were Jewish employees of Jewish merchants or Muslim employees of Muslim merchants.[9] The great Ibn 'Awkal (cf. p. 158) had at least two such aids at the same time, one Jewish and one Muslim. In a letter

addressed to him from Alexandria, his Jewish factotum asks him for a discarded robe of his for the High Holidays.[10] This request recalls the custom of Muslim rulers of bestowing on meritorious servants robes embroidered with their own names. This ancient Oriental custom carried with it the connotation of "throwing one's mantle," conferring his authority, on the person thus honored. In any case, having been the ṣabī of a great merchant was a distinction that stuck for lifetime. When a shipowner is called "the employee of so-and-so," it is very probable that he bore that designation long after he had become independent, or even after the death of his master.[11]

The term ṣabī, which we have translated literally as "boy" or "young man," was perhaps understood to mean "schoolboy" or rather "pupil," since the employer was referred to as mu'allim, or "master," "teacher." The relationship itself was essentially that of the master initiating the pupil into business, and was actually called "education." We deal with this interesting aspect of medieval Mediterranean society in the section on vocational training (*Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, chap. vi, sec. 5).

The role of slaves as business agents was of limited importance (see above, pp. 132 ff.). Commerce, as far as recognizable through the Geniza records, was mainly based on cooperation and partnership, not on employment and service.

## B. THE WAYS OF COMMERCIAL COOPERATION

### 1. "FRIENDSHIP" AND INFORMAL "COOPERATION"

In a letter sent on March 5, 1026, from al-Ahwāz, a great textile center in southwestern Iran, to Old Cairo, the writer enumerates shipments of choice fabrics dispatched to the addressees and asks the recipients to sell them and with the proceeds to buy for him whatever they deemed advantageous. He attaches a long list of exquisite Egyptian textiles, which he requests them to acquire for him. The letter, as usual, is full of polite phrases such as "may God reward you copiously" (since human beings are not able to reciprocate such great favors appropriately), or "my money and your money are one," or "all profit accruing to me comes from your pocket." Still, the tenor of the letter makes it amply clear that the services expected were not regarded as a favor, but as a duty of the writer's business correspondents. This aspect is expressly emphasized by phrases such as: "please buy . . . in return for my services to you," or: "I am no stranger to you," or, the normal conclusion of a business letter: "do not withhold from me your letters with reports about your well being and your requirements so that I may deal with them, as is my duty."[1]

The receivers of this letter were the three senior Tustarī brothers whose probity and success attracted even the attention of Muslim historiography, which generally does not occupy itself with the mer-

chant class. (To be sure, Abū Sa'd, a son of one of the three brothers, became the most influential man in the Fatimid empire before he was murdered in 1047 [see p. 183, below].) The Tustarīs, although themselves hailing from southern Iran, had been established in Egypt for many years. Thus we see two firms (the man in Al-Ahwāz also mentions his son as sender) in two very distant countries, Egypt and Iran, doing business with each other in an entirely informal way: selling and buying for each other. As is proved by the majority of business letters preserved in the Geniza, this form of commercial cooperation was the main pattern of international trade in those days.

We have observed two stationary firms exchanging services. Commuting merchants did the same. An experienced Tunisian trader gives advice to a young business friend sojourning in Egypt:

> "So-and-so [also a young Tunisian active in Egypt] sent me a letter suggesting—which I intended to do anyhow—that you two should cooperate [literally: that your hand and his hand should be in your affairs and in his]. When you travel to Būṣīr [to buy flax] you take the trouble to purchase for him what he needs, while he will take care of oil and soap [which were procured in Tunisia]. When you tarry here [in Tunisia], you will look here after his affairs, while he will travel to Egypt and make purchases for you and for himself, for he is an expert in flax and other [Egyptian] goods. I shall be very pleased with this friendship between the two of you. For he will take Abū Sa'īd's place with you [the writer's cousin with whom the addressee had a similar relationship and who was on his way to Tunisia]. I need not stress this matter any further, for your success depends on it." [2]

In the passages quoted, merchants of equal footing, whether stationary or commuting, long established or just beginning, are informally cooperating with each other. We are able to observe similar relationships between "master" and "disciple," or between a big firm and one of far more limited size. In the letter of the trader to his young friend in Egypt, the Tunisian veteran imposes on his apprentice quite a lot of errands to be done for him in Egypt. On the other hand, he also gives him advice, what to ship on his own account to Tunisia where he, the writer, would take care of it. "By God, I know that working with me guarantees your prosperity. For you confide your affairs to one who will not spoil them." [3]

In a long and angry letter to the great Ibn 'Awkal one of his many business correspondents in Qayrawān makes a remark about their mutual relationship. Among many other things, Ibn 'Awkal had been dissatisfied with the writer's handling of a shipment of brazilwood, which the latter had sold in the capital of Tunisia, instead of sending it on, as instructed, to Spain. The Qayrawān merchant, proudly emphasizes: "God's bounty is plentiful with me," and: "I need no special favors, for the little we have here in the West [Tunisia] is like the much you have over there [in Egypt]" and expresses his disappoint-

ment that Ibn 'Awkal, instead of praising his initiative, scolded him for acting against instructions given to him. "I have not taken your brazilwood for me, nor made any profit with it. It gave me only trouble. I am working for you, because I honor you and because you help me through your high social position with the goods I ship to you on my account."[4]

The list of services rendered by business friends to one another according to the Geniza records is endless. First, a merchant had to deal with the shipments sent by his correspondent, namely, to accept and then sell them as profitably as possible, and then collect on them (which was quite a different undertaking). From the proceeds, payments often had to be made to persons specified. Then local goods had to be purchased either according to a list provided or at the discretion of the buyer. Their dispatch in good time and in seaworthy ships had to be arranged and supervised, often, owing to the lack of shipping space, a most exacting task. Sometimes, the goods had to be processed before being shipped. Flax had to be combed, unbleached textiles bleached, pearls perforated, and so on.

The same services, albeit to a lesser degree, were expected to be done for friends of business friends. A short note from such a "friend of a friend" (translated in *Mediterranean People*) illustrates. A merchant in Fez, Morocco, had done a favor for a merchant in Old Cairo. Now a friend (not named) of the Fez merchant sends, via an Alexandrian business friend, a certain commodity to the Old Cairo merchant with a request to sell it and buy for its price a specified Oriental perfume. Such farfetched reciprocity of favors was by no means exceptional.[5]

For such transactions exact accounts had to be delivered, an activity often more burdensome on the merchants, it seems, than the operations themselves. The actions taken or recommended had to be explained, and sometimes, evidently, to a critical reader.

The second largest group of services expected from a business friend was the supervision and assistance of other merchants working for the writer who were either terribly busy, had constantly to be reminded of keeping their promises, or were inexperienced beginners who had to be guided or foreigners who could not be entirely trusted. It is no exaggeration to say that every second Geniza letter sent abroad contains reports or requests with regard to the activities of other merchants connected with either the writer or the addressee.

Third, friends exchanged business intelligence: information about prices (official and real), volume of business, prospective buyers, movement of ships and caravans, and any other detail conducive to successful transactions. The preparation of such reports, scores of which have been preserved, must have required mountains of time and effort.

Last, but not least, traveling merchants were expected to carry with them goods of their business correspondents or to supervise their transport. This was done in four different ways. Small consignments were

packed either into the big bales of the traveler or, as a smaller package, above them. In the case of complete bales confided to him, the traveler was requested to "sit on them," that is, to supervise them in person, or to keep an eye on them when they were entrusted to another passenger or a captain. Precious shipments of small size, as well as cash, were carried in the traveler's *khaff*, or light baggage.[6]

Business cooperation frequently developed into personal friendship, and one has the impression that this was regarded as natural, or even as a necessary condition for success. Consequently we often find in business letters the sort of request asked of a close relative or intimate friend. These little—and sometimes not so little—requests are a precious source for social history, and are not confined to the world of commerce and finance.

Presents exchanged between business friends—a regular feature of the India trade—seem not to have been customary in the Mediterranean basin. A few exceptions, such as fifteen pounds of salted tuna fish sent from Tunisia to a friend in Egypt, or two jars of wine plus "a present worth a quarter dinar" destined for a junior business friend, confirm the rule.[7]

More often than not, informal cooperation was accompanied by one or more partnerships concluded between the correspondents, frequently with additional partners. Almost any larger accounts in the Geniza contain items such as "you personally," "I personally," "our partnership with so-and-so." Merchants appear as managers or capitalists in commenda contracts concluded with their correspondents.

This being so, it is natural that correspondents were sometimes in doubt whether certain goods or sums were sent on their friends' own account or on a partnership's account. Remarks to this effect are common, and in general such questions were treated with a certain laxity. A letter to Old Cairo from al-Mahdiyya, Tunisia, in which two such occurrences are noted, reports also the following: The market price for pepper in Tunisia was bad, 130 quarter dinars. The traders from the East were happy when they could get rid of their stock for 130–132. The writer was reluctant to sell his Egyptian correspondent's pepper at a price that was then (early eleventh century) regarded as particularly poor. He therefore kept it until the time of the sailing of the autumn convoys, when he sold it to some Spanish merchants for 133 quarter dinars. On the very night preceding the departure of the convoys there arrived boats with new prospective buyers and the price jumped to 140–142. The writer, a Tunisian merchant, who had retained his pepper, did not want to keep all the profit for himself. He therefore informed his correspondent that he treated all pepper handled by him as a partnership so that they would share loss and profit in common.[8]

When we realize the variety of activities, it is not surprising that "dealing with one's friends business affairs" was one of the major preoccupations of writers of the Geniza letters.[9] Naturally, things did

not always work out well, and complaints, sometimes even bitter reproaches, are not lacking. We have already encountered one of the main causes of discord: acting against the correspondent's instructions. Such instructions were sometimes very exact: "Please sell my saffron for five dinars per mann [a weight of two pounds] on two months' credit. If you do not find such a buyer, leave it until my arrival." [10] Sometimes they left more leeway, concluding with the polite phrase, "a person like you needs no instructions," or "your own opinion has preference," to which the saying "one who is present sees what one who is absent cannot see" would be added (cf. above, p. 157).[11] Often the initiative is left entirely to the correspondent. The phrase normally used in this connection is "buy for me what God puts into your heart" or simply "whatever you deem fit." [12] But even given free rein, some correspondents were not sure of satisfying their friends. Our letters are therefore full of assurances that the writer had made every possible effort for his friend's affairs. One writer repeats three times that he never gives preference to his own interests over those of the addressee, and another mentions: "I have remained here in Alexandria [for six weeks] mainly for the shipping of your goods." A third assures his business friend that he had endangered his own life and traveled to a city with which his native town was at war mainly for the sake of his friend's affairs, which he describes in great detail.[13] The usual complaint was tardiness in rendering accounts or in forwarding the sums obtained in a sale or in the dispatch of merchandise. Occasionally, we find more serious reproofs such as charging an expenditure made on behalf of the recipient's business on the writer's account.[14]

It is, however, most noteworthy that in the very same letters wherein the writer heaps strongly worded accusations on his business friend, he expresses the greatest eagerness to continue their cooperation. We had such a case in the angry letter addressed to Ibn 'Awkal (above, p. 165). In a letter to him by another Qayrawānese merchant he is admonished to pay the writer his due (with the unusual warning "remember that life and death are in God's hand." It was bad style to die with debts on one's head). Still, the writer emphasizes: "Please honor me with the execution of your affairs in buying and selling and whatever else you may advise me to do for you, except what belongs to the elder Abū 'Imrān. You will realize how eager I shall be in carrying out your orders and you will honor me by them." [15]

The phrase "except what belongs to the elder Abū 'Imrān" reveals another aspect of informal business cooperation. Abū 'Imrān (Mūsā Ibn al-Majjānī) was the apprentice, confidant, and main representative of Ibn 'Awkal in Qayrawān, as is known from several Geniza records. The Qayrawānese merchant who wrote that angry letter wished to emphasize that he did not intend to encroach upon Abū 'Imrān's prerogatives and protested the insinuation that he had asked Ibn 'Awkal to make him instead of Abū 'Imrān his main representative

in the Tunisian capital. Abū ʿImrān himself reports a case where his master had given instructions to another merchant with regard to business in Qayrawān without consulting or informing him, with detrimental results for both.[16]

Even when terminating regular business relations with a correspondent, one tried not to close the door altogether. In the long letter referred to on page 159, above, a Tunisian merchant living in Sicily liquidates all his partnerships and other affairs with his Egyptian representative and renders detailed accounts. It was done at the request of the addressee, "but *I* desired it even more, for when a companionship lasts too long, one gets weary of each other." Then, after almost four thousands words of grudge: "I know, my lord, that your love of me is not marred by any uncertainty," and he gives him an order, "so that our close relationship should not be cut off entirely." [17]

The most common, and, so to say, official designation for informal business cooperation, was *ṣuḥba*, or companionship. Merchants of lesser stature would simply be described as the *ṣāḥib*, or "companion" of a merchant or firm of greater reputation, and this not only in letters, but also in documents.[18] The Tunisian merchant, whose long letter was discussed in the preceding paragraph, wrote a few years before to his Egyptian correspondent that both should have no ṣāḥib except each other, and that he would travel from Sicily to Egypt merely to renew their longstanding business association.[19] Friendship, *ṣadāqa,* was also a very common term. "Cooperation" *muʿāmala,* literally "having dealings with each other," would be used in order to describe a relationship as informal, not based on a legal instrument. Other expressions, such as "mutual kindness" or "close relationship" were also used.[20]

In the last source cited, "mutual kindness" is described as "old." One business letter speaks of a ṣuḥba of forty years.[21] Such relationships could and did last for several generations.

The nature of informal business cooperation as just described is not easy to grasp. For at first sight it seemed strange that a merchant should invest so much time and work in the mere expectation that his efforts would be properly reciprocated, or, as our sources say, "he serves there and I serve here," "you are in my place there, for you know well that I am your support here." [22] But this is exactly what happened. An *ʿumāla,* or commission, was paid for special services (discussed later in this chapter), not for the relationship with which we are concerned here. The fact remains that the Mediterranean trade, as revealed by the Cairo Geniza, was largely based, not upon cash benefits or legal guarantees, but on the human qualities of mutual trust and friendship.

### 2. PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMENDA

Informal business cooperation could last for a lifetime, even for several generations. Formal partnerships were of short duration in

principle and limited to specific undertakings, but this legal institution was enormously developed. It encompassed practically every economic activity: industrial, such as running a workshop, producing wine, building a house; or commercial, equally as common in the wholesale trade as in retail business; or connected with public administration such as tax farming, the basis of the whole economy of the state, or working in the royal mint or exchange, and occasionally even in public office such as that of judge, court clerk, or cantor.

The profusion of partnerships in the Geniza period was due to the fact that it substituted for two large fields that are today covered by other forms of contracts: employment and loans on interest. We have already studied twenty-seven contracts of industrial partnership, many of which are nothing but veiled forms of employment, and we encounter similar arrangements in commerce and banking. We also saw why medieval people were so opposed to the idea of being in the service of another and preferred the dignity of cooperation.[1] The difficult problem of loans on interest is studied in the section on banking (pp. 250–258, below). Even a cursory examination of the Geniza material reveals that lending money for interest was not only shunned religiously, but was also of limited significance economically. The reason for this was in some measure the same as that which induced people to avoid employment: "The borrower is a slave to the lender" (Prov. 22:7). Borrowing money manifested some sort of dependence—a state of affairs underlined by the fact that loans were often given as an act of charity. Therefore, the economic role of financial investment today was then fulfilled by various forms of partnership.

Partnerships could be concluded with regard to money, goods, or work, or any combination, and the most variegated of them appear in our records. There was no difference in principle among the variations. Any of them could be and was referred to loosely as partnership, *shirka* in Arabic and *shūthāfūth* in Hebrew.[2] It is practicable, though, to discern between two main types of contracts: in one, the contractors offer the various services in equal or unequal shares and partake in profit or loss in proportion to their investments; and in the other, one or several partners contribute capital or goods or both, while the other or others do the work, in which case they receive a smaller share in the profits, normally one-third, but do not participate in the losses.

The first type was called shirka, partnership, in the strict sense of the word, or, even more commonly, *khulṭa,* literally "mixing (of the investments)." The relationship was also expressed by some figurative phrases, such as *kīs wāḥid,* "one purse," or *lil-wasaṭ,* "into the midst," or *baynanā,* "between us," because, as we learn from several documents, the "mixed" money was actually put into one purse, and, we may imagine, this purse lay between the two contractors as they threw their coins into it in the presence of witnesses. Such figurative expressions were already found in talmudic literature in Hebrew, but seem to belong to the legal language of the Near East in general.

The second type of contract was called *qirāḍ*, meaning "mutual loan," one lending capital and the other work until the completion of the relationship, or *muḍāraba*, "mutual participation in an enterprise." Different schools of Muslim law prefer either one or the other, but in the Geniza records they seem to be equally frequent and not related to a specific country or period. In the queries addressed to Maimonides the two terms are used interchangeably. We render these terms with commenda, since this medieval form of business cooperation in Europe was essentially the same as its Muslim counterpart and was perhaps derived from it. In the parlance of the Jewish courts, the commenda was called *qirāḍ al-gōyīm* "mutual loan according to Muslim law" and was sharply differentiated from the *qirāḍ betōrat 'isqā*, "a qirāḍ in form of an *'isqā*," the Jewish partnership, in which the manager received two-thirds of the profits but was also responsible for losses.[3] The Jewish 'isqā was less common in the Geniza period than the Muslim commenda, as witness the extant contracts and an express statement to this effect in Maimonides' *Responsa*.[4] The 'isqā was less practicable. A merchant who invested work but no capital often did not have much money. Consequently his responsibility for losses was of only limited value.

In a number of legal documents referring to partnerships the manager who also invests capital, albeit sometimes small or merely nominal in amount, receives special benefits in cash or otherwise, which are described as "compensation for his toil and work," or "for his work and food." Since these expressions are invariably in Hebrew in the midst of an Arabic text, it stands to reason that a contract according to Jewish law is intended although Muslim law has similar provisions. The Mishna provided these benefits in certain partnerships in order to avoid their use for veiled taking of interest and usury.[5] As we shall presently see, some other aspects, such as the trustworthiness of the partners and the oath incumbent on them, are also expressed in Hebrew terms. It is not always evident which law, Muslim or Jewish, governed a contract, nor which school of lawyers within one of the two religions was followed. We are perhaps right in assuming that local custom ("the merchants' law") and the specific aims of the contractors in establishing the partnership were largely responsible for the conditions laid down in a contract. Both Muslim and Jewish laws, with a few exceptions, leave to their followers considerable freedom with regard to the legal form of their economic undertakings, and Maimonides' Code states with specific reference to partnerships that customs current in a country are binding, so long as no stipulations are made to the contrary.[6]

As the Geniza records tells us the following points had to be considered in the establishment of a partnership or a commenda.

1. The number and status of the contractors.
2. The object of the contract and the aims pursued with it (not always evident from the definition of the object).

3. The nature and extent of the contribution of the partners (capital, goods, premises, or work, or two or more of these), and the specific rights and privileges granted each partner.

4. The partners' share in profit and loss and their responsibility for the capital invested.

5. Conditions governing expenditure for the partnership and living expenses of the partners.

6. Conflict of interest, namely whether or not the partners could enter into other partnerships involving a similar object while theirs lasted.

7. Whether or not the partner(s) who managed the common business was regarded as "trustworthy witnesses accepted in court" and was therefore freed from "the oath incumbent on partners" (both Hebrew expressions). Normally the stronger partner imposed this exemption on the other contractors. Each partner was expected "to exert himself for the common good, to shun cheating and negligence, to act as a pious person and a gentleman, and not to put his own interests above those of his associate," but only in comparatively few contracts were such stipulations made in full.[7]

8. The duration of a partnership had to be defined, except in the case of specific commercial ventures, which were, however, the most common object of an association.

9. Similarly, it was important to state when the partners would be obliged to render accounts. Normally this was done at the conclusion of the partnership, but in many cases interim accounts were stipulated or promised.

10. Finally, special conditions of any kind could be included.

Normally a contract, let alone a letter referring to a partnership, does not contain all the points enumerated. Much was left to current practice or to oral agreements, and that incompleteness often led to lawsuits. Such lawsuits appear in queries submitted to legal authorities as well as in actual court records.

It has been observed that Muslim lawyers usually envisage partnerships only between two persons.[8] This should be viewed merely as legal idiom. In reality, as the Geniza shows, partnerships among three or four (or more) associates were as common as those between two. We came upon contracts among four and five persons while discussing industrial cooperation. In an account written by Nahray b. Nissīm in 1058, two out of five partnerships listed were among three merchants, one of whom participated with a share of only one-eighth.[9] In a letter to Nahray mention is made of a partnership to which two persons each contributed one-third and two others each one-sixth of the capital.[10] A query submitted to Maimonides speaks of a partnership consisting of at least three investors and one manager.[11] Partnerships of three or four members occur over and over, as we shall see.

The partnership situation was the same for Jews and Muslims. Two

Jewish brothers in Qayrawān had a partnership with a Muslim in 1048.[12] Several instances of four associates, one of whom was a Muslim, are referred to in *Mediterranean Society*, Volume II, chapter vii, where the legality of the conclusion of a partnership between the followers of the two religions is discussed.[13]

The commonplace objective of a partnership is that where the two contractors put identical sums (200 dirhems in the example here) "into one purse," "sell and buy, take and give and do business with their capital and their bodies" and share profit and loss, as well as managerial costs and living expenses in equal parts.[14] Participations in business ventures with different shares are of similar frequency, while profit, loss, and expenditure are divided in proportion to the investment. In a court record from July, 1162, one partner contributed 55 out of a total of 150 dinars and shared one-third of the profit and loss, while each partner had the right of unilateral disposition of the common money kept in a leather bag. The two were merchants engaged in the sale of silk in the Egyptian Rīf, each of them traveling to a different town at a time.[15] A Tunisian merchant had a one-sixth interest in a deal of lacquer sent from Egypt, having a total worth of 365 dinars, and five-sixths in a shipment of indigo and sal ammoniac dispatched from the same country. We saw cases of this kind in the discussion of partnerships consisting of more than two persons. The division of such shipments among the partners required great expert knowledge and used to be undertaken either by the receiving party, if he had sufficient authority, or by a common business friend in the presence of at least two other acquaintances serving as witnesses, or by a local representative of merchants.[16]

Newcomers to a partnership received a smaller share in the profit than the experienced members who were already established in the business. A somewhat out-of-the-way example may serve as an illustration. In January, 1061, two men, father and son, were confirmed by the representatives of the Synagogue of the Palestinians in Old Cairo as washers of the dead and admitted a third partner, who was to receive only one-fourth (not, as one would expect, one-third), of all the fees and benefits accrued.[17]

Sometimes the reason for the seemingly unequal treatment of the partners can only be surmised. In a partnership in a store of drugs, the two contractors share the work, profit and loss, as well as living expenses, but one pays in 100 dinars and the other only 50. As the latter bore the by name "the druggist," we assume that only he had a license for the store or even that the very purpose of the contract was apprenticeship. This surmise is corroborated by the fact that the contract was made effective for two years, a period quoted in another document as sufficient for apprenticeship.[18] Another contract in a store of drugs, to which each of the two partners contributed the very considerable sum of 300 dinars, states, as expected, that profit and loss

were to be shared "equally in halves," but contains also the following stipulation: "When Mr. Amram [the other partner] is in town, he may join me in selling and buying, as it pleases him." It is not made known why Mr. Amram should receive an equal share in the profit, since he was not supposed to contribute work regularly. Evidently his jāh, or social position, made a connection with him profitable.[19]

Benefiting from the prestige of one's associate is expressly mentioned as the aim of a partnership in an interesting document in which a local notable castigates two of his partners, brothers from a foreign country. He was supposed to receive half the profit and the two brothers the other half. The turnover from the store had been 4,000 dinars during fifteen months, while every month 30 dinars had been paid for "the debt on the store," to whom—is not stated. The notable had received, besides 10 dinars in cash, only half a dinar per week (the two brothers together got the same sum). Since he implies improper management by the brothers, his "sitting in the store," which was regarded as vital for the brothers' success, most probably was not very regular, that is, more often than not he did not work for the partnership. It is not excluded that the monthly debt was paid to none other than the complainant.[20]

The prominence of imponderables and the great latitude in the concept of the objective of a partnership are well illustrated by a contract concluded between 'Ullā, one of the two trustees of the court referred to above (p. 158) and a man called Yaḥyā. The partners invested 150 and 120 dinars respectively. Out of the total of 270, one received for his management 200, the other 70. Profits from all transactions made by either side would be divided in equal shares, and the same applied to any profit made by either side with capital received from third persons on commission, in partnership, or on commenda, while losses would be borne only for goods bought with the capital belonging to the partnership. Each partner had to restitute the capital handled by him including goods perished on transport by land or on the sea. The partnership was to last for two years. It was successfully concluded, for the document referring to it is a release in which the partners absolve each other from all obligations and responsibilities which might have resulted from their former connection. As we shall see later on, 'Ullā and Yaḥyā continued to have close mutual business relations of a very complex nature, but with less satisfactory results.[21]

Partnerships, in addition to those involving cooperation with equal or proportional responsibilities, or those based on imponderables such as the benefit from a partner's social position, served two vital purposes. They provided a dignified form of employment and the most popular means for the investment of capital. These two objectives sometimes appear combined in one and the same relationship.

In an agreement made around 1080, a person known from other documents as working in the caliphal House of Exchange invests 500 dinars in a banking business while his junior partner contributes only

58, yet shares in profit and loss at a ratio of $\frac{7}{24}$. He is otherwise entirely subordinate. The senior partner has full disposition of the common capital and directs and supervises all actions of the junior. The latter has no right to sign promissory notes and has no say with regard to the granting of loans. The senior is exempt from the obligation of the oath of the partners. This contract is a typical example of a partnership with employment and possibly also apprenticeship as its main purpose.[22]

A similar relationship, but without the element of apprenticeship, is apparent in an agreement where one partner invests 600 dirhems in a store of drugs and juices and the other only 20. The latter "sits in the store" and does the selling, the former does the buying. Profit and loss are shared equally, but the storekeeper receives a weekly payment of 9 dirhems, while his partner "takes out" only 4. The difference is regarded as compensation for work. The investor most probably was a wholesale merchant in drugs and juices who had similar contracts with a number of storekeepers.[23]

Mere investment was intended in such connections where the conduct of the business was entirely in the hands of the manager. There was no difference in this respect between investments in a store or in a specific business venture, such as the purchase, transport, and sale of goods. Samuel b. Judah Ibn Asad, a notable appearing in many documents, entrusted in 1152 linen and other textiles worth 1,000 dinars to two partners, each of whom contributed 50 dinars. The two were to sell these goods and buy others in the cities and the Rīf of Egypt for the duration of one year, at the end of which profits and losses would be equally divided between the investor, *ṣāḥib al-māl,* as he is called in the document, and the two managers. In a judge's note from the summer of 1156 on "a contract of partnership" for the conduct of business in Upper Egypt the capitalist pays in 160 dinars, the manager 10, the profit is again shared in equal parts (the note does not say anything about losses), while the agent "receives preferential treatment" consisting in the payment of half a dinar (per week, see p. 177, below). In a contract for the renewal of a partnership we see a merchant putting 80 dinars into a store for an additional year and sharing one-third of the profit or loss. With regard to these the manager was freed of the oath of the partners, but in case of damage to the capital, he had to prove in court that an act of God was involved. During the course of the year the capital could not be retrieved. If the investor wished to withdraw his money at its termination, he had to grant "a period of waiting" of two months—a common term in any business transaction.[24]

Finally, partnerships could fulfill a function similar in certain respects to that of a modern insurance company. In a contract made during the last third of the eleventh century, a scholar gives to his elder minor daughter 50 dinars and to his younger daughter 25, in order to provide them with a trousseau when they reached maturity. Mean-

while, the money was entrusted to a merchant in the form of a partnership to which he contributed only 5 dinars. Profit was to be shared equally by the merchant and the girls, while the former had to bear 5/12 and the latter 7/12 of the losses. The capital itself was insured, being "a deposit of the court," for which the highest possible form of security had to be given. The father had no right to demand the money back or to interfere in any way in the operations of the merchant. In case anything happened to the latter, the rabbinical court, in consultation with three experienced elders and the person in whose guardianship the girls would be at the time, would hand over the money to another partner. The difference between the amounts given to the two daughters cannot be explained by the Jewish law of primogeniture, which applied to males only, but certainly had its reason in the difference in the age of the two girls. It was expected that by the time the younger girl attained maturity, the merchant would have added so much profit to her capital that it equaled that of her sister, who, it was supposed, would have married many years before.[25]

A few additional instances of the contributions of partners, their participation in profit and loss, and their responsibility for the capital invested illustrate the wide range of variations prevailing in this matter. In a partnership covering export and import between Egypt and Syria, the manager provided approximately one-fourth of the investment (124-½ dinars out of a total of 484-½, while the capitalist contributed 360), but shared profit and loss on equal terms with his partner.[26] In a similar undertaking, a business trip to Syria, four partners intended to travel together. One of them, when prevented by illness from joining the company, stipulated that losses would be borne by himself and his partners in equal shares, while the partners would take 1/12 more in profit, the difference being regarded as compensation for their work and their living expenses.[27] A merchant traveling to Sicily in the spring of 1058 received from an Egyptian business friend Oriental spices and aromatics worth 186-⅝ dinars with a view to selling them on his native island on condition that he shared one-third of profit and loss. The contract is expressly called "partnership."[28]

Actual contracts according to Jewish law, which give the manager two-thirds of the profit but make him responsible for losses, have been found, although they are rare.[29] The Muslim commenda is more common, in which the manager receives only one-third the profit but is not responsible for losses; and there are reported instances were the losses were not borne by tne manager. In one case, the investor lost almost 50 out of 70 dinars entrusted to an overseas trader, but was convinced by "the elders of the community" that he had no claim against the man.[30] In another case, a "partnership" amounting to one thousand dinars, losses were incurred, whereupon the manager claimed to be not a partner, but the bearer of a commenda, and therefore not responsible for the losses.[31] A middleman who brought about the connection be-

tween the capitalist and the managers could become a member of the partnership. In a query submitted to Abraham Maimonides we read about a store of drugs in which 368 dinars were invested. The capitalist received one-half the profit, while the middleman and the managers each got one-sixth, the managers having an additional claim on a daily or weekly remuneration.[32] The amount of the remuneration is not indicated because it was irrelevant to the litigation that prompted the query. In other documents the sums mentioned affecting persons "sitting in the store" are low, varying from 5 dirhems per week to half a dinar (about 18 dirhems at that time). This fact may have its source in the stipulation of Jewish law that the manager receives "the wages of an unemployed," which are defined as the sum a person would consent to accept in order not to have to work.[33] In one contract, the partners receive their wheat and wine in addition to half a dinar per week.[34] In another, only the investor (of 200 dinars) receives wheat, wine, and other living expenses except those on his house and school fees for his boy.[35]

In business ventures of limited scope, the manager received his living expenses in addition to the expenditure on transport, customs, and so on, "out of the midst" (the partnership). This was common Muslim law, as well as a practice reflected in the Geniza records.[36] In an account written in 1047, the living expenses (the Muslim term *nafaqa*) amounted to 22-½ dinars for 14 months, that is, somewhat less than half a dinar per week (more exactly, 0.381 dinar).[37]

There were also partnership agreements where the manager received one-third the profit but bore the expenses himself. This usage explains why we find in one court record the investor claiming that the expenses had to be borne by the manager, while the latter declared that they were on the account of the partnership. In another legal document it was first stipulated that the transport of the goods was on the account of the traveler, and was later on changed to the condition "all expenses to the midst." Both records concerned the transport of corals, the first from the West to Egypt in 1085, the second from Egypt to Jedda, the port of Mecca, in 1036.[38]

In one case we saw the managing partner indemnified by receiving 1/12 more of the profit, while losses were divided equally. Another document refers to a similar arrangement granting the merchant doing the selling a preferential share of ⅙. We also had an agreement in the opposite direction, namely with the profit shared equally, with the manager bearing ⅙ less of the loss.[39]

It was customary for a merchant to engage in a number of partnerships even in the same commodity, or for him to take that commodity from one business friend on commission and from another on partnership. We read about such connections with others even in letters to most prominent merchants.[40] There were limitations in this matter though. A Tunisian merchant writes to the husband and son of his

sister in Egypt: "All I bought this year is in partnership with you. I did not send anything to anyone else."[41] In an unfortunately much-mutilated document of the dissolution of a partnership the manager is permitted in the future to trade with others in the merchandise concerned. By contrast, in a tripartite contract a partner undertakes, under heavy oath and under a penalty of 10 dinars, not to do any business in any form in any type of silk (evidently the object of the previous partnership) or to conclude any partnership connected with that commodity. Against this, his former partners release him from claims that might result from their former business connection. Moreover, one of them now associates with him in tax-farming three Egyptian villages.[42]

As to the duration of partnerships, joint specific ventures lasted as long as their natures—and the goodwill of the manager—warranted. In the case of a partnership in ambergris transported from Tunisia to Syria and exchanged for brazilwood, which in its turn was sold with great profit to European merchants, the operation lasted ten years, when the investor finally brought the manager to court.[43] The standard period of a partnership, even in a store, was one year, after which it was renewed, if so desired. Special circumstances could induce the parties to contract for two years or for a stretch of time appropriate to the nature of the relationship, as in the case of the capital destined for the trousseau of two minor girls described above. But even there, where the provider of the capital had relinquished the right to reclaim it, accounts had to be submitted to him every year. In joint business undertakings that often lasted longer than one year, accounts were made every year.[44]

Special conditions attached to a contract of partnership are very prominent in the Geniza records. "I have heard that my partner has gone to Damascus, although I have instructed him not to leave Ramle and that all his selling and buying should be done through Sibā', the representative of the merchants"—we read in an old letter.[45] In a contract written in 1116–1117 the two investors allow the manager to do business in the Egyptian Rīf and the three seaports Damietta, Tinnīs, and Alexandria, but nowhere else (which probably referred to the capital, where the two were active themselves).[46] In an agreement made at approximately the same time, the manager undertakes to confine his sales and purchases to Aleppo and Antioch and other places in northern Syria and to sell only for cash, since these were conditions imposed on him by his two partners who provided the capital.[47] When a manager acted against such stipulations and something happened to the principal, he was held responsible for the whole loss.[48]

Sometimes it was expressly stated that the managing partners were free to act as they saw fit.[49] Where no such statement was made, it was taken for granted. "I have no right to raise objections against you" writes a merchant in Sicily to his partner in Egypt, "with regard to

purchases made by you for our khulṭa, just as you have no right to remonstrate against my actions here." In a previous letter, the same merchant had suggested to his friend that one-third of their common capital should "travel," that is, be invested in overseas transactions, while each of the other two thirds should be used by the two partners respectively for local dealings. The proceeds from the writer's own consignments sent from Sicily to Egypt should be divided, half going to the khulṭa, and half to the sender's own account.[50] It must have been usual in both commercial and industrial partnerships that one contractor granted the other a loan, which the latter wholly or partly invested in the common undertaking. We have such contracts from the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries. In the last one, only 600 of the 3,000 dirhems received as a loan were put into the partnership.[51]

The termination of a partnership was as complicated as its initiation. This example, involving a store of drugs, illustrates. One of the partners was a "druggist" and son of a "druggist," the second was the son of a money assayer, while his own profession is not indicated. The partnership was dissolved under the following conditions:

1. The druggist receives from his partner 14 dinars, payable in monthly installments of 1 dinar.

2. He acknowledges the assessment of the value of the store, which was handed over to him.

3. He will pay debts on the partnership to the amount of 800 dirhems. Liabilities in excess of this sum will be borne by the two partners in equal shares.

4. The assets of the partnership belong to the two in equal shares and both will cooperate in collecting them.

5. Sixteen flasks (presumably of rose oil), which had not yet been paid, belonged to the druggist. Any losses with regard to this item will be borne by the two in equal shares.[52]

Other Geniza records referring to the dissolution of a partnership contain similar arrangements. One, concerning a bank in the Mediterranean port of Damietta, shows that a full six years after the withdrawal of two partners, who had invested 600 dinars, the accounts with at least one of them had not yet been settled.[53]

Most court records related to these matters are, however, mere releases, that is, statements to the effect that the parties concerned no longer had any claim against one another. Such releases, as explained in our Introduction (p. 11, above), are full of legal verbiage but contain little subject matter. Clearly, the settlement was made out of court, or before Muslim notaries. Express references to the latter are found in such documents of release with regard to partnerships. This is indeed to be expected. Since the most common form of legally valid business cooperation was the Muslim commenda, it is only natural that such contracts should be made before a Muslim authority.[54]

3. FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

In September, 1112, a merchant and his nephew (the son of his sister) appeared before a notary in Old Cairo to renew a family partnership, which had existed for years but had lacked legal sanction. Each of the two had been used to making transactions and concluding contracts without the knowledge of the other, with the commitments sometimes incurred in the name of both and sometimes only in the name of the contractor. The two relatives now made accounts, assessed their property, and laid down rules for their future cooperation. It is intensely instructive to observe the conditions under which this informal relation was converted into a formal partnership. The joint capital, 3,750 dinars, a very respectable sum, belonged to the two in equal shares. The geographical scope of the business was to be vast, comprising the West, that is, the Muslim countries of the Mediterranean west of Egypt, Egypt itself, and "Yemen," a term used to encompass the whole trade route to India. The absence of Palestine, Syria, and the Ḥijāz from this list was the result of the state of insecurity created in those countries by the advent of the Crusades. As previously, each partner was entitled to act independently of the other, while any commitment incurred by one would be binding on the other, irrespective of whether a particular document or transaction was made in the name of both or only of one of them. All profits obtained by any transaction made by one of the two likewise belonged to the partnership. Unlike previous usage, certain personal expenses would not be borne by the common purse. Since the uncle had married with money provided by it, though, the nephew would have the same prerogative when he married. No time limit was set to this contract.[1]

Thus, family partnership was characterized first by its comprehensiveness. Any profit accruing to the relatives from any work done by them belonged to the common purse. Such a stipulation was found by us in a regular partnership only once, but there the contract was only for two years, and there were other restrictions attached.[2]

Secondly, the family partnership was endowed with overriding legal power. Whatever form a partner's transactions took involved the other members equally. In conformity with this legal situation we read the following in the will of a merchant who had made his brother sole executor and guardian of his children: "Everything that is registered in my name or the name of my brother or that of us two or in the names of our children, as well as all the pieces of jewelry for the little ones [i.e., the girls for their future trousseaus], and the real estate, the sheep, the orchards, and their rights of tax-farming will be divided in equal shares—after payment of the items mentioned before—one-half going to my brother and the other half to my children." Naturally, the dying man would have had no right to dispose of the property of his

brother and his brother's children had not the overriding power of family partnership been recognized by the authorities with which such property was registered (Muslim or Jewish, or, most probably, both). The partition of the estate was a legal necessity, for the belongings of minor orphans were under the jurisdiction, or at least supervision, of the court. De facto, since the surviving brother was entrusted with the administration of the property of his nephews, as well as with their education (as the will expressly states), he was expected to continue the partnership until it could be formally reinstated when the orphans came of age.[3]

In his penetrating study, "Family Partnerships and Joint Ventures in the Venetian Republic," Frederic C. Lane makes this general statement: "In most societies, at most times, it has been the great family which by its wealth, power, prestige and presumption of permanence has been the outstanding institution in private economic enterprise."[4] The Geniza world was no exception to this rule. During the eleventh century, its trade, which then was still flourishing, was dominated by "the great houses." We are able to salvage from the debris of the Geniza the family connections of all the more prominent merchants engaged in trade. From Fez in Morocco to Al-Ahwāz in Persia, there are letters not only from merchants as individuals, but also as firms, many letters being addressed to, or sent in the names of, two or more brothers or to or from a father and his sons. It is indicative of the decline in the twelfth century of trade among the Geniza people that no such addresses have thus far been traced from that period.[5]

The Tāhertīs of Qayrawān ideally exemplify a family business for correspondence about the head of the family (called Barhūn), his four sons, and eight grandsons has been traced. One of his daughters was the mother of the great merchant Nahray b. Nissīm. Another daughter was married to one of the Berechiahs, a leading Qayrawānese family, and there were several other such connections. The Tāhertīs are repeatedly referred to in the plural as "the sons of the Tāhertī," a name designating its bearer as an immigrant to Qayrawān from Tāhert, Algeria, which was first borne by Barhūn's father. Their prominence in the Geniza remnants was partly owing to their sheer number and influence. They are described in a letter written by an opponent as "one band, united by one spirit." Or the preservation of so much material related on them may have been caused by accident. A letter discloses that one of them was in charge of collections made for the Jewish academy of Jerusalem, which explains the connection with the Synagogue of the Palestinians in Old Cairo where the Geniza chamber was located.[6]

A quick reading of their extensive correspondence conveys the impression that the second generation brothers Tāhertī worked together on a permanent basis, while the grandsons were connected with each other through more informal cooperation, strengthened by part-

nerships contracted for specific business ventures. The brothers divided their work among themselves in such a way that one or two, but not always the same ones, stayed in Egypt for several years, while the others were active at their base in Qayrawān and other places in Tunisia or in Spain. In a most detailed rendering of accounts for the year 1024, which was submitted to one of the two brothers then in Egypt, the assets of each of the latter are kept asunder, while the items belonging to those remaining in Tunisia are lumped together under the heading "for your brothers."[7]

At times it is not evident in the Geniza records whether partnerships between brothers or between a father and a son were of a transient or of a more permanent character. Such partnerships came before the court usually after the death of a participant, when the heirs had to be satisfied or settlements made with third parties.[8] Partnerships between close relatives, as among the third generation Tāhertīs, were definitely limited to specific undertakings and sometimes outsiders were involved in them too.[9] In general, it is not evident from our sources how father and son or brothers cooperated in the trade between the eastern and western parts of the Mediterranean. We observe them in business on both ends of the trade route, but the arrangement is not revealed.[10]

In retail stores and workshops it was perhaps common that brothers and even cousins worked and lived together without formal arrangements. Usually we hear about such cases only when something went wrong.[11] But close relatives were known to conclude formal partnerships even though it concerned small business. An example for a workshop was provided above (p. 89). The following agreement, dated 1181, is particularly illustrative. Two brothers conclude a partnership in a store for a certain period (which is not preserved) with equal shares in profit and loss. They will live together and eat at one table, all the common cost for food to be borne by the store. In addition, each receives 1 dirhem per day. If one brother (it seems to imply the younger one, a bachelor) does not want to partake in his brother's food, he will receive 2 dirhems per day for living expenses to the other's 4. The preferential treatment of one brother very likely meant that he was the master and the other the apprentice.[12]

At the root of the family partnership in those days was the mutual responsibility in which parents and children and brothers and sisters were held by both state and society. We have ample opportunity to study this practice with regard to the payment of the poll tax. The situation was similar in the world of commerce. When a man became bankrupt in Old Cairo, his father, a high community official, had to go into hiding.[13] Once a wine merchant traveled to Aden in South Arabia after having sold bad wine. His father was brought to court, but could not be convicted because, according to strict law, a father was not responsible for his son's debts. But "righteous elders" intervened, and the old man paid the entire sum demanded by his son's customers.[14] Con-

versely, we find a member of a prominent Damascene family and business firm granting a release to a former partner's sister, confirming that she was not responsible for any liabilities resulting from his connections with her brother.[15] Even more impressive is a magnificently written record of March 30, 1052, containing this testimony: when, shortly after the murder of the "vizier" Abū Sa'd, his brother Abū Naṣr was also killed, claims against the latter were automatically transferred to Abū Manṣūr, a remaining third brother.[16]

Joint responsibility was the basis of family partnership, but one did not automatically lead to the other. The general impression conveyed by the Geniza records is that the members of a family usually worked together, but preferred to keep their accounts separate. *Taḥābabū wa-taḥāsabū,* "love each other, but make accounts with each other" is a principle recommended in a saying used all over the Arab world. While the existence of big family business is well attested in the Geniza, especially for the eleventh century, the complete and long-range pooling of resources, as we have found in the document of September, 1112, and in the will discussed at the beginning of this subsection, seems to have been the exception rather than the rule.

## 4. COMMISSION AND AGENCY

"Some fifteen years ago, I happened to travel to Sicily. So-and-so confided to me one and a third qinṭārs of indigo, which had cost him thirty seven and a third dinars. This was done without any specification. I did not know whether the merchandise was given to me as a commenda (qirāḍ) or a shipment (*risāla*), and if it was a commenda, whether it was according to Muslim or to Jewish law. I was certain only that I had not taken it in the way of purchase on my own account." Thus writes a man in a query submitted to Maimonides, after he had been captured by pirates and had ransomed himself with his own money.[1]

This passage is a good illustration of the different conditions under which a merchant could carry with him goods given to him by a business correspondent. He could take them on his own account—unpaid for as yet—in which case, of course, he was fully responsible for any loss, including acts of God. Secondly, he could contract a partnership or a commenda, for which various legal instruments were available, as we have already seen. Finally, he could handle such goods on the account of his business friend, so that both the shipment and the profit made on it belonged exclusively to the other. The Arabic terms used in this connection are risāla, "shipment," biḍā'a, "goods," and khāṣṣa, "separate account." The first has just been quoted from Maimonides' correspondence, in which it is common. We shall meet it again. For the two others, these passages from a letter written in the middle of the eleventh century serve as examples: "Nothing is owing to you any more either from our partnership or from the goods." And a few lines later: "I do not

know to whom this belongs, whether it is from our partnership or from the [i.e., your] special account."[2]

What remuneration was expected by the traveling merchant? Our sources show three alternatives. First and foremost, the services were reciprocal and part of that peculiar informal cooperation already described (pp. 164 ff.). Secondly, a merchant traveling to a foreign country would take along shipments of another merchant as a reward for being granted a commenda or partnership, or both, covering the same voyage. This arrangement was extremely common. It is essentially only a variant of the first. Thus the notable 'Ullā, whom we have already met as a close business friend of Yaḥyā, in 1084 sent the latter to the Maghreb on a commenda worth 152-$^{11}/_{24}$ dinars, but confided to him also a risāla of scammony on the same voyage.[3]

The third alternative, which seems to us the most natural, the payment of a commission, is next to nonexistent in the Geniza records. A Sicilian merchant, traveling home from Egypt in the spring of 1058, received from one business friend a commenda worth 186-$^{15}/_{24}$ dinars on the usual condition that he would receive one-third of the profit, and with another he concluded a partnership with equal shares. What's more, the latter entrusted him with 4 bales of flax to be sold in Sicily, for which service he would be remunerated with an 'umāla, or commission.[4]

The record, which is a draft, does not say how the commission was to be assessed—nor do we learn this from the innumerable business letters and the many accounts that have survived. For in the rare cases wherein commissions are mentioned, they clearly refer not to the services of the merchants engaged in international trade, but to local go-betweens who secured the goods directly from the producers, or who served as salesmen. Once, when it was hard to get soap for export in Tunisia because of government restrictions, an 'umāla of $^3/_8$ dinar had to be paid for the purchase of 645 pounds of soap worth almost exactly 14 dinars. The commission represents 2.68 percent of the price. With this may be compared a brokerage of 2-$^1/_3$ dinars granted for mediating the purchase of 7 bales of flax in Egypt, worth approximately 108 dinars. These cases are from the eleventh century. A middleman instrumental in the sale of a quarter of a house for only 14 dinars, in 1139 received almost 7 percent of the value transferred. (This tallies with the 6 percent cashed by the realtors in the United States today for similar transactions.)

The female broker, who handled books (above, p. 161), received one-third of a dinar in 1179 as brokerage for a Pentateuch that she sold for 7-$^1/_2$ dinars, or 4.44 percent. In 1229, an agent obtained 2 dirhems for selling a copy of Maimonides *Guide for the Perplexed* for 30 dirhems and 1 dirhem for the sale of a medical book worth 10. In the last case, where we have two items in one document, we see that the smaller the object the larger the percentage of the commission, which is, of course,

reasonable. Similarly, a salesman charged with distributing a commodity to a large number of customers expected a higher-than-average commission. For at least thirty sales of brazilwood and other Oriental commodities made in Sicily between August, 1064, and July, 1065, an 'umāla of 6.5 dinars was paid on proceeds totaling 162.5 dinars, or exactly 4 percent. But for the purchase of 7 bales of flax, costing approximately 108 dinars altogether in Būṣīr, Egypt, around 1050, a brokerage, called *samsara,* and amounting to 2-⅓ dinars was given by the buyer, or about 2 percent.[5]

The general term *ju'l,* payment, which occurs frequently in reports about transactions, is but an abbreviation of *ju'l al-dilāla,* recompense for a broker's work. As expressly stated in more than one document, brokerage had to be paid by the buyer.[6] Therefore, it is mentioned in accounts of sales only when, for one reason or another, the seller had to remunerate the middleman. Indeed, we find remarks such as "but you (the seller) pay the ju'l" or "from this, brokerage and discount are to be deducted." Similarly, when out of thirty-four sales listed in one account, only two contain the item ju'l, we have to assume that the brokerage was paid by the buyers, or, since most of these were old customers, the services of a middleman were bypassed. Still, in the account of a Tunisian novice in the Egyptian trade he was charged with a fee for brokerage, for all but one item sold in Alexandria in 1046.[7]

It is obvious that the amount of the brokerage varied from one type of sale to another. This is well illustrated by the following details selected from an old account from Tunisia, throughout which the term used is ju'l.[8]

| *Goods* | *Value (in dinars)* | *Brokerage* | *Approximate percentage* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lacquer | 85 | 1-½ | 1.8 |
| Indigo, quality I | 21-5/24 | ½ | 2.5 |
| Indigo, quality II | 17-¼ | 3/8 | 2.25 |
| Rose marmalade and *Prunus mahaleb* (a medical plant) | 87 | 1-11/24 | 1.8 |
| Sugar | 33-11/24 | ½ | 1.5 |

This again points out that the average brokerage for general goods was around 2 percent. For more lasting objects, such as books and houses, and for distribution to a larger number of buyers, far higher fees were paid.

In many Geniza letters the addressee is advised to sell *bil-qism wal-rizq,* literally "with apportionment and livelihood." This phrase has been understood to mean that the writer grants the seller half a share in the profit, in addition to living expenses. Nothing could be more erroneous. The expression is merely an abbreviation of *biqism Allāh warizqih* and similar phrases, which mean "sell for whatever

price God apportions to us and grants us as a livelihood." In other words, the addressee is given free hand to sell for whatever price he may obtain.[9]

Since merchants used to contract formal partnerships or commendas with one and the same traveler to whom they also entrusted goods on commission, and since business in general was largely conducted on the basis of mutual trust and friendship, it is not surprising that the Geniza records teem with cases in which the parties were not sure on what conditions they had collaborated, or who made contradictory statements about the subject. A characteristic and commonplace example is contained in a court record referring to the notable 'Ullā and his business friend Yaḥyā (see above, p. 174): "Mr. 'Ullā made a number of claims against Mr. Yaḥyā concerning commendas, shipments, partnerships, and accounts, some made in writing and others without written records, as well as about living expenses and profits made on a number of journeys to Damietta, [Alexandria?], the countries of the West and other places." For instance, 'Ullā declared that the sum given to Yaḥyā on his trip to the West (above, p. 184) was a commenda, on which the agent would receive a third of the profit but had to bear the expenses. Yaḥyā claimed that it was a partnership to which he had contributed 50 dinars with the stipulation that the profit would be shared equally the expenses covered from the proceeds. Against this 'Ullā argued that the partnership referred to by his opponent was concluded only with regard to a trip to Damietta, not to the West. Such vagaries were not confined to the merchant class. When the mother of Ibrahim II, the Aghlabid ruler of Tunisia, was sued by two merchants for a debt of 600 dinars, she argued that that sum was included in a previous deal with the claimants, which had been settled.[10]

Regular fees were also paid to brokers and market criers and to the representatives of the merchants. We turn now to this important office.

## C. THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MERCHANTS AND HIS WAREHOUSE

Friendship and mutual trust, the very foundations of Mediterranean commerce during the High Middle Ages, were not sufficient to meet the needs of a developed economy. Foreign trade could not be based on personal relations alone. The gap left by informal cooperation was filled by the professional representative of the merchants, the wakīl al-tujjār, rendered in Hebrew as *peqīd ha-sōḥarīm,* abbreviated to *wakīl* and *pāqīd,* respectively. The nature and development of this most important office, about which we read next to nothing in the literature of this period, is richly illustrated by the Geniza records. It is significant that one of the recently discovered Judeo-Persian tombstones from

Afghanistan commemorates an "upright elder" bearing the Hebrew title pāqīd (dated 1173).[1]

The representative of the merchants had three different, though interconnected, tasks. As his title indicates, he was primarily the legal representative of the foreign merchants. A person who had a claim against a tardy debtor in another country would give a power of attorney to a friend traveling or living there to represent him in court. Such a representative was called wakīl, and many statements dealing with authorization of this kind have been preserved. But not every one had a friend willing or able to represent him in court in a foreign country. In this case, he would apply to a professional wakīl. The Geniza shows that even when a merchant living in a distant country had close and influential friends in Old Cairo, he would sometimes find it advantageous to confide his cause to the wakīl tujjār (all the while asking a friend to watch that the wakīl attended properly to the matter).[2]

This origin of the office of the representative of the merchants in the practice of law explains why quite a number of the Muslim wakīls mentioned in the Geniza were qadis, or judges, and, as we see from the contexts, did not only bear the title, but actually held the office. Such a combination of qadi and wakīl seems to us to conflict with the impartiality expected from a judge. The Muslim qadi was, however, largely an administrator, a local ruler, who needed economic power in order to give weight to his juridical and other decisions. These matters are explained in detail in the section on the Muslim judiciary.[3]

The representative's second task involved storage. This problem, as far as is evident from the Geniza, was solved in four different ways. One asked a friend to take delivery of one's shipments and to deposit them in his own store. Or, when arriving in the foreign country, one rented a *qā'a*, or ground floor of a house, which served the newcomer as storage room, office, and living quarters. There were also warehouses, called *makhzan tujjār*, and caravanserais, where one could leave one's goods. (The merchants of the Geniza records seem not to have liked to *stay* in a caravanserai.) However if a merchant did not accompany his goods and had no engaging business friend, he would store his shipments with an agent who also could take care of the marketing. This double function of storage and marketing was fulfilled by the *dār al-wakāla*, "the agency house" of a representative of the merchants. A proper wakīl had to have a dār, and he is sometimes referred to as ṣāḥib dār al-wakāla, "proprietor of an agency house."[4]

With this a third and most vital task was combined. The wakīl al-tujjār served as a depositary for the merchants and a neutral arbiter between them. When a participant in a partnership went abroad, he would not (or not in all cases) send the goods purchased there to the store of his partner, but to a wakīl, who would either store or sell them,

as advised. The money thus obtained could be left with him as well. Partners would confide in him their common goods for sale. We often find in letters the request to have the writer's merchandise sold in the house of the wakīl, and in one case we read about a commenda stipulating that the traveling partners should sell (in Ramle, Palestine) solely through a well-known local pāqīd.[5]

Since the warehouse of a wakīl was a neutral meeting ground for the merchants, it served them also as a bourse. One would form there a *ḥalqa,* or "circle" for auctioning, for example, some loads of antimony imported from Spain. Or one offered for sale, *'arḍ,* flax brought to the capital, or cheese from Europe. An important document, dated 1141, states that offers for the conclusion of a partnership were binding only when they were made in a dār wakāla, or a merchant's warehouse, but not anywhere else. This clearly indicates that these places had some official standing. It is also natural that there was a notary in the wakīl's warehouse so that commercial contracts, such as the conclusion of partnerships or commendas, could immediately receive their proper legal form. A letter in Arabic characters is addressed "to the dār al-wakāla, to be delivered to the illustrious and noble qadi Ṣadr al-Dīn, who acts in it as witness [i.e., notary]."[6]

How did one become a representative of the merchants? Ibn Muyassar, the Egyptian historian, while reporting the execution of the chief justice of the country (who was his namesake) in October, 1136, gives the following details about the latter's antecedents. After the terrible years of famine and disturbances, when order was restored (around 1075) by Badr al-Jamālī, the caliph, with a view toward reviving the economy of Egypt, ordered him to bring from Syria people with capital and wealth. Among these was the father of the future chief justice, who was a very rich man from Caesarea, Palestine. He was appointed preacher (in the caliphal mosque) "and opened in Miṣr [Old Cairo] a dār wakāla, in which he stayed until his death."[7] Great wealth and an official position enabled the newcomer to the country to become a representative of the merchants.

In another passage by the same historian we read the following: "In this year [1122/1123 A.D.] he [the vizier al-Ma'mūn Ibn al-Baṭā'iḥī] ordered the erection of a dār wakāla in Cairo for the merchants arriving from Iraq and Syria." Cairo, we remember, was the new city built for the use of the government, while Old Cairo, or Fustat, was the business center of the capital. Obviously, the new vizier wanted to divert some of the business to the seat of the administration.[8]

The semiofficial character of the dār wakāla is evident in the two cases described. It is underlined by the titles borne by two Jewish representatives of the merchants, one living in Fatimid and another in Ayyubid times, which designated them as persons serving the government.[9] When we read in a letter from Old Cairo "So-and-so is today a wakīl tujjār in partnership with Abū Muḥammad," we get the impres-

sion that some official confirmation, or at least license, was necessary. The cooperation of a Jew and a Muslim in a dār wakāla had practical advantages and is found elsewhere.[10]

Uniformity should not be expected in the ways of becoming a wakīl tujjār. If someone was influential and skillful enough to represent many foreign merchants in court, and wealthy enough to keep a large warehouse, he would apply for a license and, if he was on good terms with the proper officials, would get one. There must have been many intermediary stages between the regular well-to-do merchant who would occasionally act both as attorney and as business agent to others, and the full-fledged wakīl. One such intermediary position was occupied by our model merchant Nahray b. Nissīm. As soon as ten years after his first known arrival in Egypt he seems to have served there as a legal representative for his Tunisian countrymen. In a magnificently written power of attorney given to him in 1055 and issued in Qayrawān, his name is entered repeatedly in different ink from the rest of the document, which seems to indicate that the mandate was given to him not as a personal acquaintance of the mandating party, but as a professional legal representative.[11] In countless letters Nahray appears in Egypt as business agent, legal representative, and intercessor in public affairs for his Tunisian compatriots. But he was clearly no full-fledged, officially recognized wakīl tujjār. Whether he was preoccupied with his banking activities, or with his scholarly pursuits, or whether he lacked the capital for a dār wakāla, his apparent failure to occupy that position cannot be questioned because of lack of information in view of the enormous mass of material on him. I mention this in order to stress the point that a "representative of merchants" held some formal appointment and was not merely an influential and much-sought-after commercial leader.

As in any other vocation, a representative of merchants could succeed his father or other senior member of his family. The Geniza details several cases of fathers and sons or grandsons, or uncles and nephews successively occupying this position. We are particularly well informed about four generations of Jewish representatives of merchants in Aden, South Arabia, whose activities, however, fall outside the scope of this book.[12]

In a maritime city a wakīl tujjār could simultaneously serve as nāẓir, or superintendent of the port, and as tax-farmer of the customs and other dues. There is evidence that the government made use of the office of wakīl also for supervision of the foreign merchants. We have a document to this effect with regard to a *funduqānī,* or proprietor of a *funduq* (fonduk), or caravanserai. But since the term dār wakāla became practically identical with that of fonduk we may assume that the funduqānī largely fulfilled the same functions as the wakīl. In this document, which is written in Arabic characters, a Muslim proprietor of a caravanserai undertakes to transport to the Ṣina'a (the "Arsenal,"

the English word is derived from the Arabic), the river port of Old Cairo, all goods that had evaded the payment of dues and all those for which customs had to be paid, whether they had been brought to his own place or to other caravanserais, or had otherwise come to his knowledge. On the blank reverse side of the duly signed official document was written a Hebrew poem. Whether this leaf was abstracted from the relevant government office by someone solely in search of waste paper is another question.[13]

Representatives of the merchants were found not only in the larger cities and seaports, such as Old Cairo, Alexandria, Damietta, Tyre, Tripoli (Lebanon), and Aleppo, but also in provincial towns, such as Minyat Ziftā.[14] Great business centers such as Old Cairo, Tyre, and Aleppo, had several Jewish peqīdē sōḥarīm simultaneously, while for the capital of Egypt and Tyre at least we know that at the same time Jews confided their wares also to Muslim wakālas. In an ancient Hebrew letter, probably from the tenth century, greetings are extended to all the peqīdē ha-sōḥarīm in Aleppo, and in a document from Damietta from the end of the same century a woman grants a release to representatives of the merchants (in the plural). The document is fragmentary and their names are not preserved.[15] A court record, dated July 13, 1094, states that a merchant had bought goods in Tripoli, Lebanon, with capital entrusted to him, transported them to Egypt, and sold them in various "houses of the wakīls." He had received from these houses part of the price, and when the man who had provided the capital arrived, the latter took delivery of what was still found on his account in the "houses of wakīls." [16] An unfortunately very much effaced letter from the beginning of the thirteenth century anxiously inquires about the state of the wakīls and what had happened to them and how the public and they were affected.[17] This query seems to imply a government action against the representatives of the merchants, perhaps for evasion of dues and customs as described in the preceding paragraph.

We are not yet able to know how the various agency houses divided the available business among themselves. We just saw how one traveling merchant, working for one capitalist, entrusted the goods he imported to a number of different agency houses. Another traveler to Syria sent such varied goods as 5 bales of cotton cloth, 6 baskets of sugar, a bale of gallnuts (and other commodities whose names are not preserved) to the same dār wakāla. To be sure, it belonged to an illustrious qadi whose firm also handled mercury from Spain and lacquer imported from the Orient.[18] Wakīls of this type were as many sided as the general merchants discussed above, page 153. We may assume that others dealt with goods of all types brought from one country (as when items as different as shelled almonds and lāsīn silk, both Sicilian products, were sent to one house).[19] Others again might have been more restricted in scope.

The wakīls must also have differed widely with regard to the power and influence they wielded. A wakīl who served also as judge or superintendent of a harbor, or as a farmer of customs, or in several of these capacities at a time, was in a stronger position than a newcomer who opened a wakāla for his compatriots in the foreign country. Sometimes we find a wakīl styled "trustee of the merchants" too. This title is parallel to the legal term "trustee of the court" and designates a person with whom cash or valuables were deposited for extended periods, because his probity and economic and social position provided the necessary safeguards. In one case, a representative of the merchants bearing that title is entrusted with an estate handed over by the Muslim to the Jewish authorities.[20] In another, a widow deposits the belongings of her minor daughter with a man "in the *qaysāriyya*," or caravanserai, who might have fulfilled a similar function.[21] Complaints against wakīls who detained goods in their dār or failed to settle accounts are not infrequent.[22] Everything depended on the specific circumstances of the persons concerned. Ḥisday Ibn Shaprūṭ, the most prominent leader of the Jews of Spain during the tenth century, describes his influential position in his letter to the king of the Khazars as follows: "All the business and all the affairs of the many merchants who come here from all the countries are being arranged through me." This remark clearly refers not so much to the office of a director of customs (as assumed hitherto), as to that of a wakīl tujjār. As a successful physician Ḥisday obtained access to the court. He used the influence he gained there to establish himself as a great representative of merchants. The Geniza, too, shows persons called physicians acting as wakīls.[23]

The commission collected by a wakīl varied according to the services rendered. In two sales of flax made at the same time the wakīl received almost exactly 2 percent. In those sales, a simsār, or broker, was also engaged. In the account, though, the brokerage is as usual lumped together with the allowance granted to the buyer, so that it is impossible to know its amount and to compare it with that received by the wakīl in connection with the same transactions.[24]

A dār wakāla served also as postal address. A merchant writing from Tripoli to Old Cairo asks his business friend in the future to send his mail to the dār of a repeatedly mentioned wakīl in Ramle, Palestine. A letter from France addressed to Moses Maimonides was forwarded to him through a peqīd sōḥarīm in the Egyptian capital. The "well known pāqīd" Ibn Sha'yā in Old Cairo is required in one letter to forward all mail arriving from the writer from Damascus to a provincial town, and asked in another to deliver a letter immediately after its arrival. To be sure, such services were rendered by any store large enough to be known to the postal couriers.[25]

In conclusion, the wakīl tujjār, as we know him from the Geniza, was not the head of a merchants' guild, which was nonexistent, but a representative of foreigners and others who, for one reason or another,

were unable to attend to their business in person. The ideal man for such a vocation was a successful merchant of means who himself had come from a foreign country or was the son of such a person, but who had lived long enough in his new domicile to become well entrenched there and influential. We have read above about the father of the future chief qadi of Egypt who had immigrated from Caesarea, Palestine, and built a dār wakāla in Old Cairo. Abū Zikrī Judah Kohen, a Jewish wakīl tujjār in the Egyptian capital, came from Sijilmāsa, Morocco, and directed the activities of his Maghrebi countrymen both in Egypt and on the long trade route to India. In the eleventh century we find in Old Cairo a Muslim proprietor of a dār wakāla, called Aḥmad Ibn al-Ḥarrānī, that is, whose father had come from Harrān in northwest Mesopotamia, a trading center of great antiquity. At the same time, the wakīl mostly referred to in Ramle, Palestine, was one called Ibn al-Ḥulaybī, a derogatory nickname describing his father as a native of Aleppo in northern Syria. The very first peqīd sōḥarīm known to us in Fustat was one Ezekiel b. Mas'ūd al-'Aqrabānī, from 'Aqrabā in Transjordan from where other people also emigrated to Egypt.[26]

There must have been some connection between this office of the wakīl tujjār and the institution of the consulate in the Italian merchant colonies in the Levant. It also stands to reason that the *shah-bender*, the provost of the merchants of Cairo in later centuries, might represent a more developed stage of the wakīl tujjār of the High Middle Ages.[27] A discussion of these problems is best deferred until the publication of the Geniza documents dealing with the India trade which contain considerable material about this characteristic institution of medieval commerce.[28]

## D. BUSINESS PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

*Personal dealings and public sales.*—Buying and selling were done either by man-to-man dealings, "in sitting" namely in a store, a bazaar street, a bourse, or in a toll house, or by public auction through participation "in a circle," *fi 'l-ḥalqa*.

The term "sitting" applied to both the vendor and the buyer. "I arrived in Alexandria on the Muslim holiday and did not find him sitting," that is, his store was closed. "I shall sit with these goods in a store," that is, sell them locally, "or travel with them to Syria." "Let there be no other business to you on Sunday morning except sitting in the bazaar of the clothiers and picking up all you need," that is, while shopping, the buyer would sit down in the stores where he intended to make his purchase.[1]

Selling at auction could be done by the vendor in person, through a broker, or through a representative of merchants who, in turn, would

avail himself of the services of a middleman. "I intend, if God will, to convene after the Sabbath 'a circle' for these three bales and to sell them." "As soon as the goods were out of the customs house, I sent two pieces with a one-eyed young man to the House of so-and-so [a bourse]. 'The circle' was formed in the afternoon and he sold. . . ." "The wakīl who was in charge of the sale of the Egyptian silk sent a broker to the ḥalqa, but despite the efforts of the latter it brought only five dinars for ten pounds, from which the fees for the wakīl and the broker had to be deducted." [2]

The same person would write with regard to the same types of commodities (metals and medical plants) once "sitting down for the sale" and once "standing up for the sale," the latter presumably referring to auctions. Whether the phrase "standing by" a friend in his purchase has retained in the Geniza the connotation of physically standing up is not known.[3]

Once a price had been called out and a buyer had accepted it, the seller was not allowed to take a higher price later on.[4] Circumstances decided whether it was advantageous to sell at auction or by dealing person to person. An Arabic manuscript, we read, could be sold only in an auction. Europeans once bought indigo "in the circle" and paid exorbitant prices.[5] But a merchant writes: "Goods sold on the open market bring nothing," and this seems to have been the prevailing opinion.[6] Property of orphans had to be sold by the court in public. If such property was immobile, it was offered for sale either daily for thirty days after the morning and evening synagogue service, or for two months after the morning service of Mondays and Thursdays.[7]

*Business localities and seasons.*—Even in our sophisticated society, business tends to concentrate in certain areas and periods (downtown, Christmas sales). For various reasons, such concentration was more intensive in the Middle Ages. We read about streets and markets named for the types of merchants located there, such as the clothiers, wool merchants, dealers in secondhand garments, vendors of wax or of seeds of spices. Occasionally, the Geniza confirms that the business alluded to in the name of the locality was actually done there.[8] We have already pointed out that the assignment of a specific locality to a profession was by no means carried out rigidly (p. 83). The same applies to commerce. A letter addressed to a perfumer in the Street of the Cobblers in Alexandria was not an exception. And in the bazaar of the flax merchants in Qayrawān silk was traded as well, although silk came from Spain or Sicily and flax from Egypt.[9] Certain localities whose names did not say so served as markets for specific goods. Thus, the Qālūṣ of Old Cairo, a word derived from Greek *kalos*, beautiful, was the great bourse for the sale of flax. This is proved not so much by the fact that the gate leading to it was called the Flax Gate, but by the numerous direct references in the Geniza to deals in flax made there. An inquiry about the prices of the Qālūs involves seeking information

mainly about the prices of flax in Old Cairo. Similarly, The Square invariably means the Square of the Perfumers, although there were other business centers bearing the name square, such as the Square of the Money Changers.[10]

In addition to open bazaars and squares, there were buildings devoted specifically to commercial transactions. The qaysāriyya (spelled in the Geniza mostly with *s*, and not with *ṣ*) a Greek word derived from Caesar, betrays by its very name the foreign origin of this institution, although the history of the term is not yet known in detail. In Mamluk times there were a number of buildings in the Egyptian capital which were thus called. The Geniza papers of the Fatimid era usually speak about *the* qaysāriyya, implying that the merchants concerned normally did business only in one such building. "He relies on you that you will collect all that is due to him in the qaysāriyya." "Be not remiss in the collection of all that is still outstanding in the qaysāriyya." Two men form a partnership for work in a "house" (see below) in the qaysāriyya, each contributing 3 dinars, while their entire equipment cost 1-½ dinars. In a partnership with an investor a weaver undertakes to sell the materials he makes only "to the clothiers in the qaysāriyyas," by which perhaps the "wool qaysāriyya" and an adjacent building mentioned by a Muslim historian are meant. The Qaysāriyya of the Perfumers, given as address in a letter written around 1200, presumably replaced the Square of the Perfumers, so frequent in earlier documents.[11]

These illustrations of life in the qaysāriyya should be appraised in relation to references to another such building mentioned even more frequently in the Geniza, the *ṣaffayn,* "the two rows," presumably a colonnade with adjacent rooms. First of all, the ṣaffayn appears as a business address. Since we find among the businesses located there that of the maker of purple cloth ʿArūs b. Joseph, a figure common in the Geniza papers, the place must have harbored industry as well as commerce. Secondly, it was a market where a variety of goods, such as textiles and hides, was offered for sale. Thirdly, continual reference is made to "the accounts of the ṣaffayn," to debts to be collected there, and to agents and bankers. In short it was an exchange in which all kinds of transactions were made.[12]

Those markets and bourses were not merely locations where business was conducted, but administrative units which were farmed out by the government for the collection of dues. The tax-farmer was designated either as such, *ḍāmin al-sūq,* or with the more dignified title *ṣāḥib al-sūq,* "the master of the market," which is pre-Islamic and found in both Aramaic and Hebrew. We find this designation everywhere, for example, in Old Cairo itself, in Palermo, Sicily, in Tyre, Lebanon, and in Manbij, Syria. The dues collected by him is discussed in the subsection on customs below.[13]

Last, but not least, a great variety of "houses," or rather compounds, are referred to in the Geniza, which intrinsically were toll houses, but

fulfilled also many other commercial functions. These houses were named after the main or only commodity handled within, such as flax (in Alexandria and other cities), silk, gems, oil, sugar, rice, raisins, or almonds (in Old Cairo), or they bore general names, such as the House of Blessing in Old Cairo, or the Blessed House in Alexandria, where we find also the New House, the House of Dues, and others. Since tolls had to be paid for goods passing through or brought to any city, it appeared practical to assign to each major commodity one—and in larger cities several—customs station that served at the same time as distribution center. The payment of tolls and the storage and sale of goods are constantly referred to in connection with those "houses." Letters addressed to them seem to indicate that the merchants concerned had stores or at least regularly did business there. As in any other customs house, official money-assayers were stationed in such bourses. "A purse from the House of Blessing" means a purse bearing the seal of that office and testifying to the value of the money it contained. Finally, court sessions related to commerce, such as the handing over of the goods of a drowned foreign Jew to the local Jewish court by a Muslim judge, would also take place in such a "house," and an account in the hand of Nahray b. Nissīm repeatedly refers to "the qadi of the Qālūṣ" (see p. 193, above).[14]

Along with these manifold public business centers there were the semipublic houses of the representatives of the merchants, as well as the caravanserais which, as we have seen, served as storehouses and bourses.[15]

Market days must have been a regular institution, but are not often mentioned in the Geniza documents. On market days one might obtain items generally unavailable in stores and credit was granted one "from one market day to the next one."[16]

The comparatively regular movements of caravans and of convoys of ships divided the year into seasons of brisk and sluggish business, and this alternation is vividly reflected in our sources. A month or so before Passover, when preparations were made for the sailing of the spring convoys, one expected "the markets to become lively."[17] At least one hoped for this in the period immediately following the spring holidays.[18] Again in midsummer, when the caravans from Sijilmāsa, Morocco, and from Tunisia arrived in Egypt, and when everyone was "burning" to buy goods for shipment in the boats sailing in September, "business was moving ahead."[19] The Muslim holidays were naturally another great occasion, especially for the textile business. A good piece of clothing was not to be had in Alexandria at that time, as one letter reports, for everything was sold out.[20] In a letter from Sicily (or Tunisia) the hope is expressed that "the market will be revived with the arrival of the army." Not only in modern times has war been conducive to good business.[21]

*Transaction procedures.*—A transaction was called *safqa* (with *s*,

not ṣ), or clasping of hands, a Middle Eastern, but also an almost worldwide form of concluding business. Even the sale of a house, referred to in a document dated 1143, was confirmed by handclasp. According to Muslim law, mere oral offer and acceptance were sufficient to make any agreement binding. Jewish law required a more formal procedure, the so-called "symbolic purchase" (see *Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, chap. vii, sec. B).[22]

With some exceptions, transactions of sales were not put in writing. It was therefore of utmost importance to have them witnessed by as many trustworthy and easily available persons as possible. Both Muslim and Jewish laws demand only the presence of two witnesses. For the sake of publicity, though, and to secure witnesses in case the transaction was contested after the lapse of some time, or questioned in a distant locality, a large number of business friends was usually assembled for any deal of importance. The witnesses would also mention the deal in letters to their correspondents overseas to make it known in the country from which one or both parties to the sale originated. The witnesses were preferably chosen from the religious community to which the parties belonged, because in case of trouble the matter would normally come before a court of that community. Transactions before a Muslim notary were witnessed by Muslims even when both parties were Jewish.[23]

Written contracts of sale were made only for houses and other immobile property, for slaves, and for books. A sale by two ladies in al-Mahdiyya of a Bible codex worth 20 dinars serves as an example. The codex is carefully identified in terms of its former proprietors, and the two ladies are described as known "by their faces" to the two scribes signing the document. The ladies, presumably cousins, confirm their readiness to sell, accept receipt of the payment, and acknowledge their and their heirs' responsibility to indemnify the buyer should his proprietorship ever be contested. In conclusion, the husbands confirm the actions taken by their wives. Contracts in regard to slaves and houses are discussed on pages 140–141, above, and in *Mediterranean Society*, Volume IV, chapter ix, section A, respectively. When we find in the Geniza a contract on the sale of "one-half of four sacks of flax," costing 18 dinars, and 250 pounds of scrap of flax, worth 4 dinars, the reason for putting this transaction in writing was the fact that the two contractors had been partners in the flax, and partnerships usually were made and dissolved before a notary.[24]

In many cases, a "favor," *samāḥa,* or small discount, was granted at a sale. Most accounts do not specify the amount, but lump it together with the brokerage or simply state that the price mentioned represents the sum paid after the deduction of the discount. As far as the samāḥa is specified, it fluctuates between 1-½ per mill and 2-½ percent. The following instances illustrate the widespread custom. The Sicilian merchant (referred to above, p. 176) who in March, 1058, carried along

spices and aromatics worth 186-5/8 dinars for a business friend in Old Cairo, was instructed by the latter to grant "favors" equaling the amount of 1 dinar. This represents about 1/2 percent. In an account from the same city and the same year, 1-7/8 dinars were discounted from 94-1/2 dinars, the price of 3 bales of flax, about a 2 percent discount. A letter from Ascalon, Palestine, written a little later, reports that at a time when Egyptian flax was "deep in the earth," that is, obtained only modest prices, 3 pounds of flax were given as "favor" on a bale (which comprised an average of 450 pounds, but sometimes considerably less). Thus the reduction here amounts to something between 2/3 of a percent and 1 percent. In an account from Tunisia written on vellum around 1025, a discount was granted only on two out of thirty-one bales of Egyptian flax and consisted only in 1-1/2 and 3-1/2 per mill respectively. Of particular interest is another old account from Tunisia, also written on vellum. In one case, only 1/12 dinar, a mere trifle, was discounted from a sum of 85-13/24 dinars, while another item, costing 21-3/4 dinars, obtained a samāḥa of over half a dinar, almost exactly 2-1/2 percent. In a number of other instances the amount of the reduction is, as customary, not indicated.[25]

This account also reveals the nature of the samāḥa. After having stipulated a price of 44 dinars for 275 pounds of lacquer, the writer was forced to grant a discount of half a dinar because some of the lacquer had become yellowish. When it was discovered that part of a shipment of sugar had been affected by moisture and had coagulated, he had to make "a gift," but of how much is not said.[26] In al-Mahdiyya when, during a deal in Egyptian flax, a ship carrying the same commodity arrived in the port, the seller granted a discount of 16 from a total of 539 pounds. Thus it seems that, despite its frequency, a reduction was allowed only when warranted by special circumstances.[27]

*Payment and credit.*—Business was normally conducted on credit, and to a far higher degree, perhaps, than is the case in our own society. As we have seen, this applied even to retail business. In wholesale, the deferment of payment was paramount. When Maimonides was asked whether this procedure was not religiously objectionable since it involved some sort of veiled interest, he replied that without it most livelihoods would come to a standstill.[28]

As in the medieval fairs of the Champagne, the process of selling fell into two quite distinct phases: the sale proper and collection of the payment. Normally, a waiting period of two months was allowed, whether the merchandise sold was silk, a dyeing stuff, or a perishable material, like certain medical plants. A one-month postponement was rare. Occasionally, as in the sale of flax or antimony, we read about a deferment of four months. In one instance, a sale of wine worth 80 dinars, a comparatively high sum for such a commodity, a delay of six months was granted. A salesman of silk in the little towns of the Egyptian Rīf had to make the rounds of his customers collecting the

price a year after his sales. Specific conditions, connected with the locality, time and circumstances of the transactions concerned often accounted for such differences. In a letter from Qayrawān, written in August, 1052, at a time of great political unrest, a merchant provides his brother in Alexandria with the following information: "So-and-so and so-and-so have been in Sūsa only since Sivan [June, which means three months]; there they sold, and there they collected the payments. I have been here in Qayrawān since Shebat [January, seven months] and am stuck with the flax dealers in my endeavour to collect from them." And, in an earlier section of the same letter: "From the bazaar of the flax dealers payments are obtained only after many months. They act highhandedly against Muslims, let alone against Jews." A merchant of Palermo whose silk was sold in Egypt with a slight loss, but who had to wait for payment a long time, writes to his correspondent in Egypt: "My real loss is the delay of payment. I would have preferred to sell with a heavier loss and to cash the price instead of letting the money idle for three years." [29]

One gets the impression that the period of collection itself was again subdivided: first, a seller "demanded payment," that is, he agreed with the buyer what and when he would pay, and later he "cashed." This passage from an eleventh-century letter from al-Mahdiyya is illustrative: "We sold the linen for 38–42 [quarter dinars per one hundred pounds]. When we had completed the sales, we intended to collect the prices. However, then there happened in the country what you know, so that the collection became interrupted. After much effort and pressure we were able to demand approximately 600 quarter dinars out of the total [i.e., an agreement was reached that the buyers would pay that sum]. Payment has not yet been made; thus I have nothing to report in this respect." [30] Or we read in a letter from Old Cairo: "I shall make an effort to cash what is due us on the bazaar." [31]

Frequently we read that the term of the delay of the payment granted was not kept by the buyer. In a rather intimate letter to a business friend a writer complains that, in addition to the usual two months allowed, the addressee had let pass another five months without paying; "thus, you have slaughtered me without a knife [i.e., ruined me]." [32] In the sale of wine worth 80 dinars referred to above, payment was made in five installments, the latest being not six months, as had been stipulated, but a full year after the deal. In countless letters the addressee is asked to receive payment for the writer. In one, an Alexandrian merchant requests three such collections, one of which was due from a very prominent banker in Old Cairo, and another payment was on a debt of 100 dinars, which the writer was reluctant to demand from the buyer "lest he should become angry." He apologizes for troubling the addressee with things "concerning which those who are involved behave in an improper way." [33]

Selling on credit was not entirely disadvantageous for the vendor, as

the price obtained was fixed correspondingly. This is well illustrated in a curious story reported in a query submitted to Moses Maimonides. A Jewish agent had sold an unspecified object belonging to a Muslim to another Jew against cash payment. The proprietor insisted on a delay of payment, of course, against a higher price. This was a clear case of taking interest. Still, Maimonides ruled that the transaction was permissible, since the profit was going to the Muslim (and not to a Jew who was not permitted to take interest from a coreligionist).[34]

For prompt payment, or rather for what the Geniza documents call "speeding up," a cash discount was granted. For partial acceleration of the payment, in one case, a little over ⅔ dinar was discounted on a price of 29-⅛ dinars, from which already 1-¼ dinars had been deducted for brokerage and "favors," (cf. above, pp. 196 ff.). On a similar price of 29-½ dinars, from which the same items had been subtracted to the amount of 1-⅔ dinars, a cash discount to the value of 1-⅙ dinars was given for *full* "speeding up." The goods concerned were bales of flax. It should be noted that remarks about such cash discounts are extremely rare in the Geniza papers, and it is natural that no discount was granted for commodities which sold well. "Do not sell your caraway for less than 3-½ [dinars] per qinṭār, cash or credit," writes a merchant from Alexandria to his friend in Fustat, "otherwise, keep it." [35]

Similarly, references to earnest money or down payment are so infrequent that the exact meaning of the terms used is by no means clear. *'Urbūn* (or *'arabūn*) is, of course, Greek *arrhabōn*, but in the passage cited is seems to mean prepayment of the full sum rather than earnest money. The passage is contained in the story told on page 167, concerning the sudden rise in the price of pepper in al-Mahdiyya, when boats with prospective buyers arrived unexpectedly. "They bought it for 140–142 [quarter dinars for one hundred pounds] and I took 'urbūns to that amount." [36]

In another letter from Tunisia, the term *qaddam*, "to pay in advance," is used. The writer had given 25 dinars on two units of coral strings, which he sent on to Egypt, each of which cost 15 dinars. This seems to indicate that he would pay the remaining one-sixth of the total price only after receiving the payment for the corals from his business correspondent in Egypt. Similarly, a Cairene merchant writing from Damascus informs his partner that he had sent 21 camel loads of paper, for which he had "paid in advance" 250 dinars, while the transport cost 5-½ to 6 dinars per load. This would make a total of 115-½ to 126 dinars for transport, about half the sum "paid in advance." Since 50 percent of the original price as cost of the transport on the long and arduous route from Damascus to Cairo seems by no means exaggerated, we may assume that the advance payment on Damascene paper, like that made on Tunisian corals, covered most of the sum to be paid. Additional sources are needed for the elucidation of this interesting facet of medieval commerce.[37]

Another aspect of payment about which we would like to know more

is its deferment until the arrival of the buyer in his hometown. A Jewish merchant in al-Mahdiyya allowed his Muslim customer to pay part of the price of a commodity sold to him in the latter's native city of Qayrawān according to instructions which he would receive. This form of payment is regarded as a special case of the transfer of debts which is discussed in the subsection on banking and finance (pp. 241 ff.).[38]

*Business principles and policies.*—The guiding rule of commerce discernible in the Geniza papers was keeping one's capital working all the time. "Do not let idle with you one single dirhem of our partnership, but buy whatever God puts into your mind and send it on with the very first ship sailing." This is the advice of a Spanish merchant writing from Tyre, Lebanon, to his partner in Old Cairo. As a result of such an attitude, a rich Tunisian, arriving in Palermo, Sicily, on the eve of the High Holidays did not find in his office 1 dinar cash, although he had there goods worth 2,000 dinars.[39]

The very technique of trading was governed by this principle. One ordered "exchange goods" when shipping a merchandise to another country, such as wool, flax, and cinnamon to be bought in Egypt against silk robes, silver, scammony, and saffron sent there. One would "offer" a Western commodity such as silk "against" an Oriental product such as tamarind, or buy oil in Tunisia with the money from the sale of lacquer sent there. But nowhere do we read in the Geniza documents about outright barter. All transactions are expressed in monetary values. We must, of course, remember that gold and silver coins were regarded also as goods in those days and, under certain circumstances, traded as such. It was therefore quite natural that a merchant in Sicily should send to his business correspondent in Old Cairo "130 dinars for the four bales of flax, but the silk for the price of the cinnamon." When a Moroccan merchant asked a traveler from Alexandria to exchange his ambergris in Spain for silk, the latter, scrutinizing the markets, sold it instead for gold, explaining, after his return, to the Moroccan's Cairene friend that his own choice was more advantageous.[40]

"Profit is made through buying well." [41] Therefore, "never buy when you are in a hurry." [42] This principle refers both to the quality of the merchandise, about which we read much good advice, and its timing. One should buy before the prospective buyers arrived from overseas, but after the pilgrim caravan, which carried much of the Oriental goods, had returned from Mecca.[43]

The vital question was *what* to buy. The general principles that regulated the fluctuation of prices, erratic as they sometimes seemed to be, were well known to the merchants and are discussed in the subsection on commodities and trade routes (pp. 217 ff.). Because of the slowness of communications it was difficult to keep pace with developments overseas or even in another city. Since all the countries between Spain and South Arabia formed one closely knit trading area, changes

affecting business in one country immediately had repercussions on the situation in others. We find, indeed, that the greatest concern of the writers of the Geniza letters was business intelligence. The term used for it, *akhbār*, "information," was identical with that of the intelligence services of the government and the police. One inquired first about prices, of course, but then also about many other things, such as the volume of business, the availability of capital, the movements of ships and caravans, the arrival and departure of merchants, the general situation in a country, and the safety of communications. While writing from Alexandria to Old Cairo one would ask for the prices not only in that city, but also for information about Yemen and Syria. In letters from Jerusalem inquiries about "the West" would be included with questions about prices in Old Cairo and the state of the Nile water. A Qayrawānese merchant traveling to the Egyptian capital wrote from Alexandria that he was unable to proceed because he had to wait for the "news from the West." Price lists were attached to many letters put regularly at the end so as to provide the latest information obtained on the day the letter was sent off.[44]

As for sale, one tried to be first on the market. The ancient Near Eastern maxim; "sell as long as the dust is still on your feet [from the journey to the market]" is echoed in countless Geniza letters in which the addressee is advised to send a commodity ordered with the very first ship sailing, or to sell a shipment announced at the hour of its arrival.[45] The government seems not always to have encouraged this tendency. An Alexandrian merchant had succeeded with some others in sending a certain commodity to Old Cairo earlier than most of his competitors. The customs house kept the earlier arrivals for a full five days until all the merchants from Alexandria had brought in the same commodity.[46] When a consignment arrived late, it would be reported as unsalable because "it was behind the bales of other people."[47] Needless to say, there were also situations where "moving slowly was preferable." We read instructions, usually accompanied by an explanation of the reasons, to keep an article until it had attained a certain price or to sell it only to regular customers but not to others. When a wealthy merchant writes that he had been unable to sell Egyptian flax he had imported to Tunisia and Sicily two years before, he certainly means that he refused to dispose of it at an unfavorable price, for in the same letter he reports about sales of flax realized by him for other people.[48]

Geniza letters often contain maxims reflecting a wisdom derived by merchants from long experience and applicable to any society. "Leave one thing for the sake of another," that is, do first things first, or renounce even attractive projects in order to succeed in the really important undertakings. "In case of doubt, hold back"—and wait for further instructions. "Success in business does not depend only on the effort made," that is, failure is not always one's own fault. I discuss

more of this material in *Mediterranean Society,* Volume IV, chapter x.[49]

The merchant's profession was regarded as one requiring high technical and ethical standards. "Your actions are not those of a merchant" was a reproach made to a business friend when the writer was "very angry" with him.[50] Complaints about unethical behavior of businessmen are suprisingly rare, if we except tardiness in payment, which must have been a rather common malady. An accusation of the type found in a court record from 1041–1042 against a prominent merchant suspected of tampering with the weight of shipments is absolutely exceptional. Even with regard to customs, cheating was by no means rampant. The exalted religious postulations addressed by al-Ghazālī, the great Muslim theologian, to the merchants of his time were not altogether unrealistic. The businessmen of the Geniza repeatedly assert that they act for God's sake. "May God reward me for what I do with my fellow merchants. I do not aspire to a compensation from men." [51]

*Profits and losses.*—It is to be expected that our information about this subject must necessarily be less complete than we would wish. We have detailed reports about purchases, sales, and prices, but these reports are rarely, if ever, related to one another, and, with respect to profits, we must be content with occasional remarks. There is some circumstantial material that enables us to make certain general deductions.

Goods sent out of Egypt to Tunisia in spring, 1048, were sold partly at a profit of "2 dirhems on 1" and partly at "1 dirhem on 1." The fact is mentioned as an illustration of the truth that in a good year it pays to import high-quality merchandise.[52] In two cases, different from each other in time, place, and object, 50 percent, or almost 50 percent was regarded as a good profit, and in a third, 25 percent. The first was a sale of pearls in Tunisia, early in the eleventh century; the second, one of brazilwood in Syria made around 1080, and the third, purchases in Tunisia for sale in Egypt.[53] At the same time, a foreigner in Egypt describes how he missed an opportunity to get 25 dinars for his mercury which was worth 19. "Had I luck, I would have made a profit of 6 dinars," or about 30 percent.[54]

A most detailed account concerning a bale of purple cloth shipped around 1100 from Old Cairo to Tunisia reveals that that article cost 66-$\frac{1}{4}$ dinars in its place of origin and was sold at its destination for 264-$\frac{7}{24}$ local dinars worth around 94 Egyptian dinars. Freight, dues, and other expenses amounted to about 14 dinars, so that a profit of approximately 23 percent was obtained.[55]

These examples are illustrative of itinerant wholesale business. The following details concern retailers and local merchants. An immigrant to Palestine from the West, who had married a local girl, was given a loan of 5 dinars to enable him to open a store in Jerusalem (around 1050). The store brought a profit of 1 dinar in the course of two months,

which represents a yearly average of 120 percent. Since small sums like that just mentioned were sufficient for operating a store, it seems that small storekeepers were indeed able to make gains approximating the amount of the capital invested.[56]

The greater merchants could not expect such profits. A partnership between a notable and two young brothers had a turnover of 4,000 dinars in fifteen months, all transactions, as is expressly stated, bringing profit and none loss. They had to pay 30 dinars per month, a total of 450 dinars, for a debt, and all three together each week received 1 dinar for expenses, which amounts to 65 dinars for the whole period. Besides this, the notable had taken out 10 dinars on one occasion. Thus the total income for the partnership was 525 dinars, not a very high sum for such a turnover. The senior partner claimed indeed that the profit had been larger.[57] Two partners who bought silk in Old Cairo, and sold it in the towns and villages of the Egyptian Rīf, made a profit of 12 dinars on sales totaling 101 (including the profit, as the document expressly states), which is about 13 percent and which seems to have been regarded as normal.[58] In a large account dated 1058, the profit made is indicated in two cases. It was 2 dinars on a sale of lapis lazuli worth 14, a handsome 16.7 percent of the original price, but only 5 qīrāṭs on women's clothing sold for almost 5 dinars, a bare 4 percent approximately.[59]

The scarcity of details about profits is matched by an abundance about losses. There is hardly a single lengthy Geniza letter bound overseas which does not contain some such information about goods either damaged by seawater or other agents, or partially lost by jettisoning or totally by sinking. In addition to reports about accidents caused by uncertain communications we read bitter remarks about the vagaries of the market owing to many unforseeable factors, such as the unexpected arrival or nonarrival of goods or prospective buyers and the general economic situation created through caprices of nature unharnessed or of political upheavals, both in the country where the business was conducted and elsewhere. Throughout this book, and in particular in the next chapter, telling examples of such occurrences are described.

The merchants of the Geniza period met the constant menace of impending losses in three ways: by spreading the risk, by striving for substantial gains, and, in extreme cases, by mutual help. All commerce was based on participating in a number of ventures of limited scope, although it varied widely in practice, some businessmen splitting up their available capital into a great many small fractions, while the majority participated in fewer undertakings with more substantial sums. The latter were the true merchants, known to us by their more or less extended correspondence, while the former, it seems, mainly intended to let their capital work without too much risk to themselves.[60]

Reports about losses usually are concluded with the consolation that God will replace the deprivation suffered. Sometimes we read that such restitution had taken place simultaneously with the loss. After reporting the sinking of one bale of flax in one ship and the jettisoning of two other bales from another, a loss of over 100 dinars, the writer continues: "However, the prices here in al-Mahdiyya were so good that you have retrieved a multiple of what you have lost." Most of the reports on misfortunes are so styled as to suggest that those concerned were indeed in a position to cope with them.[61]

If, however, through acts of God or through his own fault, a merchant found himself unable to meet his commitments, his fellow merchants, as a rule, would come to his assistance and prevent his becoming bankrupt. No type of formal insurance was known to the people of the Geniza letters, but this readiness for mutual help must be regarded as a form of it. Such help was extended in many different ways, loans of capital or goods, without interest of course, being the most frequent form. In cases of insolvency, the authorities and more prominent members of the community intervened and arranged for a settlement, mostly acceptance of payment in installments of small sums over a long term. In more serious cases, one-third of the debt was remitted, another third paid in cash, and for the remaining third payment in installments promised.[62] When things got to their worst, namely when, after the declaration of bankruptcy, the person concerned was unable to make the payments agreed upon in the settlement, the communal authorities would assemble the more affluent merchants who would then make contributions in cash.[63] The declaration of bankruptcy, or "oath of destitution," would be admitted only after approval by the highest communal authorities. It seems that when such a declaration was accepted by a Jewish court, it was regarded as sufficient by the Muslim judge or police concerned with the case. In a document made out in Minyat Ziftā, Lower Egypt, in 1175, two persons testify to the poverty of a person who had been condemned to imprisonment for insolvency when his Jewish debtor had brought him before a Muslim court. The deposition, which is signed by five, makes sense only if we assume that it was intended to save the poor debtor from imprisonment.[64] A document dated 1161 reports on a collection made for a widow by a well-known tājir, or big merchant. The contributions ranged from the Nagid to the slave (and business agent) of the tājir, who gave his share (2 dinars, the same sum as that donated by the Nagid and his master) on the very day on which the document was written. The participation of the slave seems to indicate that the dead merchant had been connected with his master by partnership or otherwise. In any case, such a collection also represents some form of mutual help.[65]

*Accounts and bookkeeping.*—"I received a letter from Isaac Nafūsī [a prominent India merchant] scolding me for having asked him to write down his account for me. I sent him a letter of apology, re-

nouncing my demand and promising never to ask him again to commit his account for me to writing. This is in fact hypersensitivity on his side. You know well how often I publicly expressed my gratitude toward him while he was away in India and Yemen."[66]

"God forbid that I should request exact accounts from you or anyone else. I simply wanted to know how much I still owe and what you have shipped."[67]

Many utterings such as these seem to indicate that the merchants resented giving accounts and viewed requests for them as expressions of mistrust. There is some truth in this assumption. Business cooperation was regarded as a relationship of mutual trust and friendship, and, consequently, did not require minute reporting on the actions taken. In reality we see that for most transactions referred to in the Geniza letters exact accounts are rendered, and, even when they totaled many hundreds of dinars, not a single qirāṭ or even ḥabba, respectively $1/24$ or $1/72$ of a dinar, is overlooked. Shorter accounts are included as part of the letters, while longer ones are referred to as being enclosed, and, in some cases, both letter and account have been preserved.[68] Requests for statements about specific transactions or the business done during a year or more are extremely frequent, although they are often made indirectly: one asks the addressee to remind one's business correspondent of this duty. In one letter the addressee is repeatedly requested to urge a third person to make accounts for a fourth.[69]

Accounts were often written on single sheets,[70] like letters, and, like these, sometimes in a number of copies. This was done for reasons of safety or because, in addition to the addressee, other persons, such as partners, were involved. "Send me your account in three or four copies, for the peace of my mind depends on the account. Please take the trouble this year and do what you have failed to do for me during last year and the one before." And in the same letter: " 'Aṭā' [the writer's cousin] sent you an account in two copies about the transactions between you and them [i.e., 'Aṭā' and partners]." "I sent you one copy of the account from Sfax and one from al-Mahdiyya. Please report about all the actions taken in connection with it." Statements about indemnities to be paid after the foundering of a ship were also required to be submitted in two copies.[71]

Longer accounts, even when sent to a customer, would be written in booklet form. To be sure, the examples preserved could originally have been copies retained by the sender for his own use. But we find actual references to such "account books" as accompanying business letters. "You mentioned that X [a debt owed to the addressee from the previous year] was listed in the account book. I looked through the letters and books that I received and found. . . ." "I am returning to you your account book so that you may see for yourself what you have sent me and what you still owe."[72]

The popular format of such a *daftar*, or booklet, was narrow; they

were between 3 and 4 inches wide. Their length varied between a short type (5-½ to 6 inches), and a longer one (7-½ to 11 inches). The reason for this narrow format was the custom of carrying one's accounts in one's sleeve in order to have them ready for reference, if needed. Thus we read in an eleventh-century deposition in court: "So-and-so took a daftar out of his sleeve and said: I do not like to enter anything in my daftar the correctness of which has not been established by me."[73]

There were, however, also account books of regular book size, written either on paper or, in Tunisia only, on vellum. They may represent the *aṣl,* or original, retained by the sender, although some are formulated as addressing the customer.[74]

To forestall misunderstanding, it should be noted that not a single complete account book from the classical Geniza period has come down to us. All we have are loose leaves folded in such a way as to form part of a booklet and sometimes also bearing a number. For a long time these account sheets puzzled me. They invariably start on the left page of the front side—Hebrew and Arabic, we remember, are written from right to left—then continue on the two inside pages, and conclude on the right outside page. Sometimes the first page, alone or together with one or more of the consecutive pages, is the continuation of an account beginning on a preceding leaf not preserved. After the sequence of the pages had been established, there was something even more puzzling. All the four-page sheets examined were consecutive. This means that they could not have been part of a bound booklet (unless it was the center fold). The mystery was solved by the observation (made by my wife) that most of the sheets were perforated by two holes not in the fold, as would have been the case with a bound volume, but at some distance from it. In other words, when they were assembled, the sheets were folded and laid not one inside the other, but one above the other. This means that such a daftar was not like a ledger in which accounts were entered, but resembled a modern file into which prepared sheets were inserted from time to time.[75]

This technical aspect of the Geniza account books had to be explained in some detail because it divulges certain aspects of their nature. There are no ledgers in the Geniza, no remnants of systematic bookkeeping. What we do have is a great variety of accounts, which, when kept together in a daftar, certainly formed an important source of reference, but hardly could have served to reflect the financial shade of a complex business. In view of the enormous diversification of commercial undertakings studied above (pp. 153 ff.) we must admire the skill (and good memory) of those medieval merchants who were able to control farflung and diversified operations without the technical aids at the disposal of later generations.

If we disregard household accounts and short memos, often scribbled on the backs of letters received and on smaller or larger scraps of paper,

the following main types of accounts have been found or are referred to in the Geniza.

1. Reports to partners or customers about shipments received, sales and purchases made, goods or cash or both shipped, and balances outstanding. The basic form of this type is what could be called a "season report," namely business done during a summer, from the arrival of the convoys of ships in the spring to their sailing in the fall. To this, an appendix superscribed "Sold after the sailing of the ships" would often be added. Since balances were normally carried over to the next business season, such reports frequently cover more than one year. One very detailed but only partly preserved account of monthly sales of Oriental products in Sicily covers the period from August, 1064, to October, 1065, but at the end the Egyptian partner is requested to do what the writer had done, namely to send in a similar account for the Muslim years 454–457 (Jan. 15, 1062–Dec. 2, 1065). The preserved part of the document makes it clear that with the rendering of the account this specific business relationship, which had lasted for four years, was completed. In return for the Oriental products shipped from Egypt, as usual, part goods and part gold had been sent back from Sicily.[76]

2. Accounts for specific connections or transactions, such as a partnership, a sale, a purchase, or a transport of goods. A partnership, in turn, could be concluded with regard to a specified object, such as a certain quantity of silk, or a consignment consisting of different goods, such as gold, silver, corals, seven types of clothing, and some smaller items, such as almonds. Such specific accounts usually bore superscriptions: "Account of the silk held in partnership with Barhūn b. Ṣāliḥ," or "The Partnership with Yeshū'ā" (the consignment of different goods referred to above), "Expenses in Abū Ṣīr" (a detailed report of the purchase of large quantities of flax in Būṣīr and another locality in Egypt and their transport to Rosetta), "Sale of the Tripolitanian and Ḥasanī dinars" (a long account of a banker to a business friend), "Account for the Elder Abu 'l-Afrāḥ 'Arūs b. Joseph" (about a transport of purple cloth from Old Cairo to Tunisia (cf. above, p. 202).[77]

3. Accounts made for the writer's own use. These are again of two basic types, one of a general nature listing payments and receipts, purchases and sales, and the other restricted to specific types of goods or transactions. Strange as it may seem, these general current accounts nowhere bear a date (except when referring to a shipment having arrived some time in advance of the writing), nor is any other principle of arrangement apparent in them. The sequence of the transactions listed was obviously regarded by the merchants as a sufficient aid for remembering their approximate date. It may be that the *muwāyama*, daily account or journal, mentioned in some Geniza letters, was the name of these current accounts, presumably because they were entered day by day, but without noting the date. One wonders whether the

*rūz-nāma,* which is the Persian word for "journal" and designated a governmental account book, lived up to its name or not. In such an official journal, most likely, the receipts issued were copied exactly, and since these necessarily contained a date, it was automatically recorded. The merchants, though, did not confirm their transactions in writing and consequently did not attribute particular importance to the exact date.[78]

The personal accounts dealing with specific objects differed widely in nature. One, superscribed "Pledges for the Cheese," contains eighty-one lines listing persons to whom cheese, but also a few other commodities, such as wax, wine, and silk, were sold, mostly on credit of course. With regard to four, more complicated transactions, dates are provided. Another account is entitled "Details about the Cashing of the Draft (*suftaja*)," with the word "cashing" emphasized by a stroke drawn above it, in the first as well as in the nineteenth line near the conclusion of the record of intricate dealings. No dates are given. Of a still different type is an account beginning as follows: "God's blessings make rich [Proverbs 10:22]. Bought with God's blessings—Praise to him—for 'Arūs b. Joseph [the writer of the account]: A Bundle of Silk." There follows a specification of the type, weight, and price of the silks bought, which amounted to several hundred dinars, as well as a note about a shipment and a debt, but again no dates are given.[79]

Mention must also be made of the accounts submitted by community officials, which have been preserved in great numbers and which are illustrative of financial practices in general. Their main characteristic is the lack of a comprehensive account showing the total revenue and expenditure of the community for a certain period. Each individual item of revenue was earmarked or used for a specific purpose. Similarly, and in accordance with the principle of the "exchange of goods" (discussed above, p. 200), many business accounts note against each sale a purchase made, carry over the balance to the next twin operation, and so on. The bigger merchants show themselves more efficient in their accounts than the public administration. They first list all the credits and sales, then the debits and purchases, and conclude with the balances and an indication of the actions taken or to be taken.[80]

Even these methodical and comprehensive records would invariably "close the account" at the end of each year. This "closing of the account" (a term perhaps taken over by several European languages from the Arabic) appears to have been more than a mere arrangement for convenient reckoning. It seems to have involved an obligation to settle one's debts. "I shall demand payment as from the beginning of next month. Try to come here too, and collect what is due you from your sales, for only four months remain until the end of their [i.e., the Muslims'] year." The yearly closing of the accounts was probably derived from the practice of tax collection. Taxes were often paid in installments, but had to be paid in full by the end of the year, or at least shortly thereafter.[81]

The Muslim year, which is about eleven days shorter than a sun year, is totally unsuited to serve as a financial year. Still we find it used throughout in the Geniza records, although the merchants would sometimes prefer the far more practical Jewish calendar. We find this, for example, in the years 1045–1046, when the Muslim New Year fell in July, the midst of the business season.[82]

During the eleventh century numbers were rendered by Hebrew letters, and in later times also by the Coptic (originally Greek) numerals, both of which do not lend themselves easily to arithmetical operations. As is well known, during the entire Middle Ages Arab numerals were used only by mathematicians in their scientific works, but not by Middle Eastern merchants until they learned the great technical merits of these numerals from the Europeans. Nowhere in the Geniza accounts do we find traces of arithmetical operations. All computations seem to have been made by heart—and rarely do we find a mistake. In the exceptional case where we do come upon an inaccuracy, the circumstances suggest that it was because of the sloppiness of the copyist rather than an error in computation. One business letter does state: "I was in a hurry and made a mistake in the addition." Similarly, a document about public revenue and expenditure corrects an error defacing an account rendered for the preceding year.[83]

An account book was a file into which a merchant entered, in addition to notes about his own payments and receipts, a copy of any account submitted to a business correspondent. This copy was called aṣl, "root," "original," because it was admitted in court as circumstantial evidence, if not as formal proof. There are several references to this practice. A member of a partnership declares on his deathbed that all the sums pertaining to the partnership had been listed in his daftar, in his own hand. When a claim was brought in Jerusalem against a representative of merchants in Ramle, he was asked to go down to that city and to verify the facts from his account book. In a court record from 1099 two parties make peace after old accounts were found by which the mutual claims could be settled. Even more telling perhaps is the following passage from a court record: "One of the witnesses remembers the fact, although it is not recorded in a daftar."[84]

All in all, though far below the standards reached by the Italians in the late Middle Ages, accounting in the Geniza period followed well-established practices indicative of a long tradition and was a vital instrument in the maintenance of an orderly economy.

## E. COMMODITIES, TRADE ROUTES, AND PRICES

*On goods in general.*—The list on pages 153–154, above, of all the goods handled by a single merchant gives a good idea of the great diversity of the Mediterranean trade in the eleventh century. About two hundred items of wholesale business recur in the Geniza documents,

around forty of which were of major importance. With regard to the four groups of silk and silk wares, flax and linen cloth, dyeing and varnishing stuffs, and medical and culinary plants, there is enough material for a Ph.D. dissertation on each. But the object of this book is society rather than economy, human relations and not technology. So, while surveying the main commodities of the Mediterranean area, the routes they traveled, and the prices they obtained, we have in mind the people who traded and those who used them rather than the materials themselves.

The Arabic language of the Geniza letters, like the English, possesses a number of synonyms for the notion of goods. In one short letter we find four different designations for the same object; and there are others.[1] The vocabulary is equally rich in the various degrees of quality. There are at least twelve grades, "mediocre," as in English meaning poor rather than average.[2] In many letters, as one would expect, the addressee is admonished to buy solely of the very best quality. In others he is advised to take along also poorer stuff if it is inexpensive. Thus, a merchant in Qayrawān instructs his correspondent in Egypt that in Sicily only first-class indigo can be sold, while a modest quality of lapis lazuli may also find a market.[3] Prices often varied for slightly different qualities, packed together in the same bale. We have long lists to this effect, and astonishment is expressed that the European merchants do not pay the same attention to the nuances in quality.[4] On the other hand, for the sake of expediting transactions, one would sometimes forego such minutiae and sell or buy *en bloc*. A business letter sent from Fez, Morocco, to Almeria, Spain, wisely leaves it to the man on the spot to decide which of the two methods to follow.[5]

Goods were usually ordered and shipped in round numbers: 100 pieces of cloth, sent from Qayrawān to Egypt; 400 such pieces and 400 gowns, going the same way; 25 Sicilian pounds of shelled almonds, also shipped to the East; 50 mantles, 10 pairs of stockings, 10 carpets, two orders of 20 pairs of shoes, and another two of 20 knives and many other commodities ordered in round numbers from Spain; 700 hides, all bought for the same price in Sicily. A hundred jugs of wine were estimated to have a value of 250 dirhems in Egypt, and 50 beehives, or rather swarms of bees, cost 20 dinars there. This list could go on indefinitely. A newspaper report from January 6, 1967, announces the discovery of 40 millstones in a boat buried beneath the sea floor off the Palestinian coast. Since a handmill consists of two stones, this consignment probably contained the same quantity of "20 millstones," as the one mentioned in the Geniza letter cited on page 60, above, as sent from Palestine.[6]

Bear in mind that in those days goods did not come from an assembly line. Although traded in round numbers, they were not delivered by the producer in such quantities. A merchant would order 20 pieces of clothing, but advise his correspondent to collect them from various stores in the bazaar.[7] Or, 165 gowns worth 165-$\frac{13}{72}$ dinars would be

shipped to a customer, but they had been picked up in quantities of one to six pieces, in the course of 29 purchases made in 19 different stores (as the accounts of these operations, rendered to a partner, tellingly reveal).[8] In other words, trading in round numbers did not depend on industrial techniques, but was a device of commercial expediency. We often find, too, that shipments would contain whatever quantities a merchant was able to secure with the means at his disposal. In general, it seems that the closer a business relationship was, the less the principle of round numbers prevailed.

Despite the great variety of goods in wholesale trade which appear in the Geniza papers, there are sizable areas of commercial activities which are not represented at all. The main cereals, such as wheat, barley, and rice, are next to absent, except in purchases for private consumption or in sales of the products of one's own fields. Thus far, only one legal document referring to a wholesale merchant in grain has come to light.[9] There is nothing about trade in camels, horses, mules, or donkeys—the cars and trucks of that period—either as mounts or beasts of burden, and nothing about cattle for either food or breeding. Only the sale of chicken, so popular with both Jews and Egyptians, is a frequently mentioned occupation. The slave trade, in the ninth century still partly in Jewish hands, is not represented in the "classical" Geniza at all.[10] Similarly, transactions in arms and in timber, both of which to a large extent came from Europe, are referred to in the Geniza papers only in connection with purchases for private or communal needs.

*Trade routes and volume of commerce.*—Even more pronounced were the limitations in respect to trade routes. The Rūm—Byzantines, Italians, and others—were customers of first-rate importance for the goods sold on the markets of Syria, Egypt, Tunisia, and Sicily. As a rule, though, it was the Europeans who came to these markets, not the Arabic-speaking traders who transported the goods to Europe. There are scattered references to business trips to Constantinople, Salerno, Amalfi, Genoa, Marseilles, and other Christian cities, as well as to "the countries of the Rūm" in general, but it is clear that such trips were neither regular nor made by a great number of merchants. As to exports from Europe, it was perhaps natural that timber should have been carried to Egypt in Venetian, Genoese, and Amalfian boats. Byzantine textiles and medical plants, both referred to so frequently in the Geniza, were imported by traders other than the Jews specializing in these articles. To all intents and purposes, the Arabic-speaking Jewish merchants of the Mediterranean area (with the possible exception of those of Sicily and Spain) were confined to the realm of Islam. They were connected with their coreligionists in Europe by bonds of general culture, religion, and philanthropy (extended by the former to the latter), but not by business relations of any significance. The European traders with whom the Geniza merchants dealt were exclusively Christian.[11]

The trade routes within the Arab world were characterized by the

overlapping of long- and short-distance itineraries. During the tenth and earlier parts of the eleventh centuries, Tunisia and Sicily formed the hub of the Mediterranean, selling the goods of the East to the West and vice versa. The Tunisian and Sicilian ports therefore appear as the terminals of most lines originating in Egypt. At the same time there were ships that operated directly between Alexandria and the ports of the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts of Spain, such as Seville, Denia, and Almeria. One unfortunately fragmentary Geniza letter refers to a seemingly direct line between Alexandria and Bijāya (Bougie) in present-day Algeria.[12]

The Sijilmāsa caravan, named for its Moroccan desert port of departure, which also served as a terminal for the Saharan traffic, passed through Qayrawān on its way to Egypt. A few days after it had left (we read in one letter), another caravan set out for Egypt from the capital of Tunisia. Sūsa, the northern port of Tunisia, where the famous Sūsī fabrics were made, and Sfax, the outlet for the olive oil grown in the south, normally traded with more distant countries through al-Mahdiyya, the port of the capital which, since 1057, served as the capital itself. Still, we find ships sailing directly from Egypt to these smaller ports and delivering goods which the merchants of the capital had to buy there. The city of Tunis, of limited importance in the eleventh century, had a direct line to Alexandria and served as a terminal for a caravan route issuing in Tripoli, Libya, forwarding the goods received to Palermo, Sicily, by boat. Tripoli, itself an important maritime city, was more often than not bypassed by the ships going to the West, evident over and over in the Geniza. From one letter, however, we learn about four boats leaving Alexandria for Tripoli on a single day. The smaller harbors between Alexandria and Tunisia, such as Tobruk (of World War II fame), Barnīk (the ancient Berenike), or Syrta, would be touched by the international traffic only when ships were in trouble or for some other special reason. Barqa, the capital of eastern Libya (comparable to Benghazi today) held a position in the middle between Tripoli and the smaller harbors.[13]

The Syro-Palestinian coast, stretching from Suwaydiyya, the harbor of Antioch, in the north, to Ghaza in the south, is represented in the Geniza by fourteen ports, of which Ascalon, Acre, Tyre, Tripoli (Ṭarābulus), and al-Lādhiqiyya were the most prominent. Here again we have this overlapping of short- and long-distance lines. In one letter, sent from Alexandria to Tyre, the writer first asks the addressee to give certain instructions to a young man who would arrive in an *'ushārī*, or Nile boat, in that port and, then proceed northward—or as they said at that time, "go down"—to Ṭarābulus. He also reports: "A number of ships have arrived from al-Lādhiqiyya and likewise from Damascus which were loaded in al-Lādhiqiyya," a statement that implies of course that these ships had not touched Tyre on their way to Egypt. One letter from Alexandria is written on board a ship sailing to al-

Lādhiqiyya on the night before its departure.[14] A letter, anxiously inquiring about "Acre ships" that might perhaps bring female prisoners, supposes the ships had sailed from that port.[15] An announcement from Alexandria that five boats had arrived from Suwaydiyya, carrying gallnuts, jujube, raisins, walnuts, sumac, and tragacanth gum, and specifying the prices these "northern" products obtained, also leaves the impression that these boats had not called at any of the thirteen Syro-Palestinian and three Egyptian ports (Damietta, Tinnīs, Rosetta) that lay between that Antioch port and the maritime capital of Egypt. For otherwise, as usual, a statement to this effect would have been made.[16]

Long- and short-distance traffic lines existing side by side are natural for our modern techniques of transportation. For the Middle Ages it is remarkable. Nautical and other technical considerations are weighed in the next chapter. What calls for comment here is that the very organization of commerce was favorable to such duplication. In view of the clumsy means of locomotion available at that time, one wonders why the Moroccans did not simply transport their goods to Qayrawān and have them sent on to the East with the caravans of Tunisia. Obviously, the volume of commerce between Morocco and Egypt was, at least sometimes, sufficient to make the establishment of a direct caravan line between Sijilmāsa and Cairo profitable. There must also have been enough merchants in Egypt who had dealings with Spain and Morocco, to the exclusion of Tunisia and Sicily, to justify the establishment of direct shipping lines between Alexandria and the ports of Spain. Certainly the great India trader Ḥalfōn b. Nethanel was such a merchant. Over thirty letters in his archive show him active in Spain and Morocco, but nowhere in his extended correspondence, comprising about seventy-five items, is there any allusion to his ever having been in Sicily or Tunisia.[17] When a letter from Alexandria, written around 1065, informs its addressee that in a ship arriving from Denia, Spain, not a single Jewish traveler had arrived and that neither that ship nor the one coming from Almeria carried any goods for him (with the addition, "may God not thwart your efforts"), one gets the impression that such occurrences were exceptional. About one hundred and twenty years later, Maimonides remarks in a responsum that Jews, even learned ones, were regular passengers on the boats commuting between Seville and Alexandria.[18]

Yet, with very few exceptions, the Geniza has preserved no letters dispatched direct to Egypt from Spain or Morocco.[19] (Ḥalfōn received his "western" correspondence while he was in these countries and carried it with him to Egypt.) This lack might have had its reasons partly in specific circumstances (discussed above, p. 21). To a large extent, however, it might also find its explanation in the technique of commerce of that time. Only the bigger merchants would engage in long-distance trade with all the risks it involved. The rank and file, which

form the bulk of the Geniza people, traveled from one great emporium to the next, and moved on only when they were not able to sell what they had or buy what they were after. The Andalusians sold their silk or copper and the many other products of their country in Tunisia and there bought flax and spices and other goods that had come from Egypt and Syria. A recurrent topic in the business correspondence from Tunisia was whether to sell the goods imported from Spain locally, or to forward them to Egypt, and vice versa.[20] The westerners normally did business in Lower Egypt and in Palestine and Syria. When they were not successful, they moved farther afield, to Jedda, the port of Mecca, or to Upper Egypt and Yemen.[21] Goods that could not be sold in the cities of Egypt were taken to the towns of the Rīf, or "countryside." Supplies remaining from deals in Tyre were shipped to the northernmost big port on the Syro-Palestinian coast, al-Lādhiqiyya. And when there was a poor summer season in Alexandria, everyone packed his wares and traveled to the West.[22]

Thus far we have considered only the main trade routes. There were others but they were used only by a minority of people represented in the Geniza papers. There was traffic between Cyprus and the Syro-Palestinian coast and Egypt, as well as between Egypt and the three main ports on the southern shores of Asia Minor, namely (from East to West): Tarsus, the birthplace of Paul; Seleucia, today Silifke; and Anṭalya, the ancient Attaleia, today Adalia. Two ships from Anṭalya, one with seven Jews on board and one with ten, were captured by Muslim pirates at approximately the same time, so that traffic must have been rather lively, at least during the period concerned (around 1028). One letter speaks about a voyage from Egypt to Constantinople via Jaffa, Rhodes, and Chios, but the trip, rather than following a regular route, might have been occasioned by military operations. A letter describing a journey in a ship going from Egypt via Constantinople and Crete to Amalfi in Italy seems likewise to imply that the itinerary was not common. The great Greek port of Salonika is repeatedly referred to, but in a way that betrays there was not much trade between it and Egypt, at least so far as the merchants who left us their papers in the Geniza are concerned. The sea routes to the cities of Italy and southern France were of prime importance, but, to repeat, were not frequented by the Jews of the eastern Mediterranean. Southern France became even more conspicuous in the Geniza in the thirteenth century, but then it was French Jews who traveled to the East rather than Oriental Jews trading with the West.[23]

What was the volume of the business carried on along the trade routes surveyed? Almost every Geniza letter contains some details about the quantity and value of goods and there are also some occasional remarks about the general state of commerce and its volume. But merchants usually concluded partnerships and commendas with a number of correspondents, with the consequence that a letter or an

account usually reflects only a fraction of the transactions done during one year. And remarks about business at large usually were made only when demanded for special reasons. Still, the data provided in the Geniza are so abundant that a comprehensive inquiry into the subject should prove to be very instructive. For the time being, we must be content with illustrative examples.

Around 1065, at a time of famine and grave disorders in Egypt, the total volume of olive oil imported from Tunisia to Alexandria was estimated by a merchant writing from that city as comprising five thousand *ziqq*, or skins.[24] In another letter by the same man, written eight days later, the same total import is estimated as amounting to six thousand skins.[25] This discrepancy seems to indicate that these estimates were not entirely without foundation. A caravan of five hundred camels carrying Oriental spices from Qulzum (today Suez) to Cairo was regarded as very large.[26] With this may be compared the arrival of a single Jewish merchant from Almeria, Spain, in Fez, Morocco, with five camel loads.[27] A report from Alexandria during a winter of the early years of the eleventh century states that a great number of travelers had been detained in the city because many ships—five are specified by name—needed repairs. Over five thousand camel loads of goods were left wintering in Alexandria together with the stranded merchants.[28] In another letter, written by a merchant to his son at the end of the business season, he lists the names of the ships that had arrived from Sicily in that particular year and summarizes: "altogether ten ships, each carrying about five hundred passengers." There is no indication that the letter, which was written in the second half of the eleventh century, intended to state anything exceptional. The number of ships mentioned is paralleled by the many references to spring and autumn convoys, which invariably consisted of less than ten boats, five being the average. "Sicily," mentioned in this report from Alexandria, most probably included Tunisia, since the Tunisian boats often called on Palermo or Mazara on their way to Egypt. Travelers were predominantly merchants. When a considerable number of pilgrims arrived on a ship in a certain year, the Geniza letters take cognizance of the fact. Most of the pilgrims also engaged in business ventures. Thus, this report about five thousand passengers making use of the most frequented trade route between Sicily and Egypt, during one year might be representative of the situation as a whole. Notice the predilection for the round number five displayed by the writers of the Geniza letters. The habit might mean that the average capacity of a big ship was actually four hundred passengers, as suggested by other documents.[29]

As to the volume of business of individual traders, by happy coincidence, we possess reports for two years of all the consignments sent by Ibn 'Awkal (see p. 158, above) from Alexandria to Tunisia and Sicily. In one year it consisted of 179 standard bales (weighing between

450 and 600 pounds) and 2 smaller bundles, and in the other, 89 bales shipped to al-Mahdiyya, Tunisia, and 57 to Sicily, altogether 146 bales. The majority of these consignments certainly contained flax. Whatever their contents, they were worth several thousand dinars, or hundreds of thousands of dollars in our money.[30] In an account written in Tunisia in approximately the same period (first half of the eleventh century), a total of 133 bales of flax worth 2,318 dinars was sold for one merchant during one season, and in those early years the dinar had a higher value than later in the century. Another account from that period shows that 2,033 dinars were cashed in Qayrawān for consignments of indigo, sugar, and silver (vessels or disused coins). A partnership between two merchants in 160 bales of flax is referred to in a court record of the year 1041–1042. These are examples of quantities sent by the greater merchants represented in the Geniza.[31]

A stroke of luck provided reports for the entire business conducted by a merchant from Qayrawān with his uncle and cousin, respectively, during two different years. In one year it amounted to 1,628 quarter dinars and half a qīrāṭ, or 407-1/48 dinars, and in another year to 675 dinars.[32] This tallies with two detailed accounts, one for the senior Tāhertī brothers regarding the year 1024 and the other for one of the junior Tāhertīs in 1048. The first specifies the weight, quality, and price of 23 bales of flax, received in Qayrawān from Egypt, against which Tunisian textiles worth 2,828 quarter dinars, or 707 dinars, were shipped. The second details a great variety of Sicilian and Tunisian goods shipped to Egypt of a total value of 281 dinars and 16,889-½ dirhems. The dinar at that time contained an average of 36 dirhems. Thus the second sum equaled 469 dinars, and the total was 750 dinars. There is little doubt that this account lists all the goods sent from Qayrawān to the Tāhertī sojourning in Egypt, for his relations with the writer of the account are known to us from a number of documents (partly dated), which show that the latter was his representative and "disciple" who took care of all his affairs at home while he was abroad.[33] A merchant from Alexandria, who had been connected with a business correspondent in Old Cairo for many years, writes to him as follows: "I have not asked you for the old accounts, but please, with your usual kindness, provide me with the *complete* account for this year, written [or signed] in your own hand." After having submitted this request, the writer specifies the assets and liabilities himself: 310 dinars were expended by him and about 250 by his correspondent. In this case, however, we definitely know that both merchants had dealings with others too.[34]

The contracts of partnership, such as those discussed above (pp. 173–179), the court records dealing with debts and other obligations resulting from wholesale transactions, and, above all, the business letters themselves show that the value of goods exchanged between average overseas traders in one season amounted only to several hundred dinars,

sometimes to over a thousand, but often only to a few hundreds or even less. Shipments comprising more than a hundred bales during one year and worth over two thousand dinars are exceptional. This, taken together with our assumption that about eight thousand merchants commuted on the Tunisia-Sicily-Egypt maritime trade route in a normal year, gives some idea of the scope of Mediterranean trade within the realm of Islam during the eleventh century.

"Medieval commerce at its peak was great only in comparison with that of earlier periods. When compared with that of the modern world, it shrinks in size to a trickle."[35]

This statement, made by a competent economic historian, is certainly confirmed by the evidence of the Geniza documents. If, however, it is compared with the size of the population and the standard of living of that period, their volume of commerce is impressive both in view of the achievement of the individual merchant and with regard to the place of commerce within the medieval economy in general.

*The jungle of prices.*—The study of prices in the Geniza, let alone in Arabic literary sources, is like attempting to solve an equation with four unknowns: the exact nature, type, and quality of the commodity traded; the identity of the weights, measures, or other indications of quantity referred to; the value of the money paid; and, finally, the time, place, and specific circumstances of the transaction concerned. In many cases, when prices are indicated, one, or more, or all, of these elements are not expressly mentioned and may be established only with the aid of other sources. "The price of silk here is 25." Such remarks abound. An analysis of the letter in which this remark occurs would show that it was written in Alexandria in the second half of the eleventh century. Other documents reveal that silk was regularly traded in quantities of 10 pounds and that there was a standard price of 2 dinars per pound. Thus the remark in question would mean that, at the time that letter was written, 10 pounds of silk in Alexandria cost 25 dinars, or 25 percent above the standard price. Since there is no indication of any monetary crisis in that letter, at least the approximate value of the dinar may be taken for granted. In many cases, however, auxiliary sources assisting us in the correct assessment of incompletely indicated prices remain to be found.[36]

An investigation into the economy or even the society of a given period cannot be complete without an understanding of the meaning of the prices occurring in its writings. A study of the Geniza with this aim in mind is particularly rewarding, because the same subject often is illustrated from many angles: by formal, detailed accounts; by court records and contracts; and, in particular, by numerous and often very significant references in letters from different times and places. A full and authoritative appreciation of this rich and reliable, but widely scattered, material will be possible only after the completion of many preparatory special studies. What follows gives an idea of the nature

of information to be expected from these sources and the problems involved in their perusal.[37]

The Geniza papers have two different terms for the notion of price, *si'r*, the price of the unit sold, and *thaman,* the total proceeds of one sale. This distinction is extremely useful for our research, especially as many papers are damaged and incomplete. Unfortunately, the writers of our letters are often content with mentioning only the total proceeds from transactions made for the addressee, since the latter was familiar with the qualities and quantities shipped. Such statements, disappointing as they are for the history of prices, are nevertheless valuable as indications of the volume of the business conducted by the person concerned.[38]

The *market price,* as opposed to that actually obtained, is also designated by the word si'r (similar to Hebrew and Aramaic, from which it is derived). The identity of medieval with ancient Near Eastern terminology in this field goes even further. In Arabic, as in Hebrew, one would write: "I do not know how it [a commodity] *stands* today, for the price has not yet *come out.*" The fixing of the official price, for which several other terms exist, must sometimes have been a long drawn-out affair, for the writer of the passage quoted, who lived in Alexandria, already knew the price for this commodity (mercury, usually from Spain), as it had been fixed in the warehouse of a Muslim judge in Old Cairo. Another merchant, who had already bought flax before the promulgation of the official price, urges a friend to send him immediately 200 dinars, for "the price will be fixed after the [Easter] holidays," and he wanted to buy more before that event. In Spain, too, we hear about purchases made before the price was "defined."[39] The detention of goods by a customs house until more of the same supply arrived [noted above, p. 201] might have had its reason in the endeavor to prevent sales before a reasonable price could be fixed. This was a principle acknowledged in both Jewish and Muslim law.[40]

Price lists have been preserved from Almeria, Spain (originally sent to Morocco), from Palermo and Mazara, Sicily (forwarded to Egypt directly or via Tunisia), from the Syro-Palestinian ports, but mainly from Tunisia and Egypt, the most important ones from Egypt being lists prepared for merchants en route to India. Some of these notes were intended to be confidential, as was occasionally emphasized, and one was written for this reason in mirror script, its decipherment requiring the use of a mirror. Others give the impression that they were copied from lists published by an authority, most probably "the master of the market," who would compile them in consultation with the more prominent merchants. For many items, two and even three prices are indicated, the higher usually quoted *before* (and not, as we would do, after) the lower price. The lists of market prices were directives, not official tariffs, for the Geniza letters everywhere assume that one buys and sells for whatever price one is able to fetch. The differences be-

tween the official and the actual prices sometimes were negligible; for example, market prices in quarter dinars for one hundred pounds, in Qayrawān, for pepper: 120 or 135 (see next paragraph), sold for 119; indigo: 100–300, according to the very different qualities, sold for 270–277. Sometimes, when specific conditions prevailed, the discrepancy was considerably larger. When wax, one of the export staples of Tunisia, was worth in Qayrawān 6-$\frac{9}{24}$ (dinars for one hundred pounds) the writer was able to buy it for 4-$\frac{19}{24}$, because, as we learn from the same letter, no ships were available for its transport overseas. By special favor, he was permitted to load his buy on the Sultan's ship sailing to Egypt.[41]

The market prices for transit goods would normally be fixed sometime after the arrival and before the departure of the main caravans and convoys of ships. But they were, of course, susceptible to change. There are many assurances that a merchant would "watch the price" and not even open his bales until the very best price was fixed, and there are many references to actual fluctuations. We have two price lists from Qayrawān sent at the end of the summer season and separated from each other by only five days. In them is revealed that while goods as different as flax, indigo, musk, and cinnamon did not change their prices, pepper went down from 135 to 120 (see preceding paragraph), and brazilwood, that great staple dye of the Middle Ages, fell from 300 ("and not to be had") to 200, and only cubeb (an Indian aromatic and tonic) rose from "4 [pounds] for a dinar" to 3-½.[42] A Tunisian, writing from Old Cairo to his cousin in Alexandria on a Sunday in July, reports that in the preceding week he had sold fifty jars of honey, a staple export of his native country, at the market price of 3-½ dinars, some of them for $\frac{1}{16}$ dinar less. On Sunday, the price was 3 dinars and 10 qirāṭs, or $\frac{1}{12}$ dinar less than on Friday. It was known that large quantities of honey were on their way to Old Cairo, but the seasoned trader remarks that it was by no means sure whether their arrival would push the price down. He sold his remaining fifty jars anyway, having the week before already ordered another one hundred from Alexandria. In a postscript, written on the following Thursday, he reports that much of that commodity had indeed arrived and the price had fallen to 2 dinars and 20 qirāṭs, or a drop of one-sixth the original price during one week, but that the sales were still profitable.[43]

In the same letter, after having described the fluctuations of the prices of other commodities, the writer resignedly remarks: *"Prices follow no principle,"* an observation in which he is echoed by another merchant, writing from the same city, but a century later: *"The prices are in the hand of God,"* which means: they are inscrutable. The latter saying was common in ancient Arabic literature (also in the form: "God fixes the prices"), where it is ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad and others. A most eminent contemporary American economist to whom

this dictum was reported thought that it contained the best theory of prices known to him.[44]

While fully aware of the capriciousness of markets and prices, the Geniza merchants often provided explanations for the specific phenomena that they had to report. "Flax did not sell, because it was the time of buying olive oil [namely for export]," we read in a letter referring to Sfax, the south Tunisian port with olives growing in the hinterland. "The price of indigo rose during the last two weeks. It was in demand by both Syrians and Maghrebis. In my opinion, it will rise even more, for the Maghrebis will buy it, because flax is scarce and expensive, while indigo sells well in the Maghreb." In other words, the prices of one commodity are influenced by the lack or availability of capital caused by developments with regard to other commodities. "Silk," writes a man from Qayrawān, "is scarce, but still sells badly," which means that rarity alone is no guarantee for a good market, a truth already discussed by the ancient Arabs. We also hear the opposite: "Sugar sells well because of its scarcity." A cousin of the merchant who complained about the unprincipled behavior of prices in Old Cairo uses the same maxim with regard to al-Mahdiyya, but adds an explanation: "The prices of our city follow no principle, even the rate of exchange [between the gold dinar and the silver dirhem] sometimes rises up to seventeen points and sometimes goes down at the same rate according to demand and so do the goods, for our place is very *weak*." In the same letter he notes: "The prices in general are *quiet*." Another letter from the same city enlarges upon this point by explaining that a poor country such as Tunisia had become at that time, cannot have a stable economy, since even slight changes in supply and demand throw its market out of gear. How the uncertainties of seafaring in those days were influential on the fluctuation of prices is shown in the next chapter (p. 302).[45]

*Pepper.*—The historian studying the movements of prices and reasons for their fluctuation is confronted with formidable difficulties. The various commodities were traded in specific weights, measures or receptacles, often differing according to place and period, and in the relevant communications often not indicated. Thus the standard weight for pepper (as it appears in our accounts) was a *buhār,* comprising three hundred pounds, on the Indian route, while on the Mediterranean it was one hundred pounds; there was also a *ḥiml,* or camel load, which was approximately identical with the *ʿidl,* or ship's bale, both having a nominal capacity of five hundred pounds. Even at the very time the letters now in our hands were written, an uncertainty as to the exact weight of a standard camel load or ship's bale must have prevailed. Thus we find in a list of market prices from Old Cairo, submitted around 1050: "Pepper went up from 80 [dinars] for 480 [pounds] to its former price of 85," but in another one, communicated about ten years later: "Pepper 80 for 505."[46]

Still another letter from Old Cairo, written around 1110 and reporting

an actual purchase, refers to a standard weight in the following passage: "I bought 2 bales of pepper, one weighing 375 and the other 378, having 3 pounds overweight; price 83-¼ dinars without cost [of transport, dues and freight]." This seems to indicate that the standard weight of a bale of pepper at that time was 375 pounds, which is not surprising, for the actual weight of individual bales during the eleventh century was mostly less and often far less than five hundred pounds.[47] The average market price for a bale or load of pepper in Old Cairo in the 1050's was, according to the two reports reproduced above, 80 dinars. We find quotations in the same period which were far lower (60 and even 55) and others markedly higher. A merchant in Alexandria bought a bale, inclusive of the cost of transport, for 145 dinars. Even if we assume the exorbitant sum of 20 dinars for the extra expenditure, we arrive at a price of 125 dinars for the bale. Another Alexandrian orders his Cairene correspondent to hand over to a relative 200 dinars for the purchase of a bale of pepper and in another letter written at the same time sends him 100 to buy himself a camel's load of pepper, "but nothing else." All these details are taken from the correspondence of Nahray b. Nissīm (cf. above, p. 153).[48]

Disregarding the last two items, which must have been written at the time of an abnormal boom, we find that the price for one hundred pounds of pepper was variously noted in Old Cairo during the second half of the eleventh century as amounting to 11, 12, 16, 17, and 25 dinars. Even for a commodity so common and so often referred to as pepper, only a provisional estimate is possible in the present state of research. Its average price (if such a thing existed) in Old Cairo during the period concerned seems indeed to have been around 17 dinars for one hundred pounds.[49]

To be compared with this are the prices at the receiving end, namely in Tunisia and Sicily. At the beginning of the eleventh century a camel load of pepper cost 83 dinars in Sicily, that is, approximately the same price as in the two cases registered for Old Cairo a few decades later.[50] In those early years, however, the purchasing power of the dinar was higher. For the middle of the eleventh century in Sicily and Tunisia, I noted the following prices for pepper; the list was compiled at random and is by no means exhaustive.

(1) 15 dinars for one hundred pounds of pepper ("lame" [i.e., hard to sell];[51] (2) 22-½ ("the official price, but no one sells for it"); (3) 23-¾; (4) 25, datable at 1063 approximately; (5) 26-¼; (6) 28; (7) 29-¾, 30, 33-¾ (see above, p. 219); (8) 32-⅓, 33 ("bad"), 35, 35-½; (9) 33 ("because in request by Europeans"); (10) 35-¼ (around 1064); (11) 36, 38 (the latter "sold to Europeans"); (12, 13) 37-½, both referring to Sicily; (14) 45; (15) 62 (written at the end of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century).[52]

None of the letters containing these prices is dated, but, with the exception of 1, 5, 12, and 15, most of them can be ascribed with a high

degree of probability to the 1050's and 1060's. The average price obtained would be around 34 dinars, or twice the price of pepper in Old Cairo at the same time. The costs of packing, customs dues, and transport have to be deducted from this, which, although varying greatly according to the availability of cargo room and the security of communications, would rarely be more than 20 percent. In view of the great risks and losses regularly incurred, an average profit of 80 percent seems reasonable.

Our analysis of the prices of pepper, if correct, reveals a fluctuation that is not excessive and a difference in price between the countries of export and import which corresponds to what one would expect under the circumstances. We should not generalize and assume that the same was true of other staples. All must be scrutinized separately, even though they do not lend themselves to such an analysis as conveniently as pepper and a few other Oriental staples, such as lacquer and brazilwood. There were different varieties and qualities of pepper and we hear much about them in the India trade. In the Mediterranean accounts, however, pepper appears as a uniform standard commodity. Thus, at least the first of the four elements necessary for the evaluation of prices (cf. above, p. 217), namely the nature of the commodity, may be taken for granted.

*Silk.*—The staple goods produced around the Mediterranean, such as silk, flax, indigo, corals, and many others, were not so standardized. Silk is referred to in the Geniza papers in twelve varieties, differing according to quality and the ways and degrees of processing (specified in n. 53). Moreover, the fabrics were distinguished according to the countries of origin, which ranged from Spain to Sicily, the main producers in the West, to Syria, Iraq, and the farthest provinces of Iran in the East, and even to India and China.[53] This bewildering variety was mitigated by the the production of a standard silk worth 2 dinars per pound, or rather 20 dinars per ten pounds. We find this price from the thirties of the eleventh century to the fifties of the twelfth and beyond.[54] This standard silk must have had a stabilizing influence on the economy comparable in a measure to that of the gold dinar itself. In the India trade it sometimes replaces the cash usually sent from the West. The standard unit of ten pounds seems to have been regarded as sufficient, if put to work, for guaranteeing a modest livelihood for a family. A merchant stranded through shipwreck in Sicily sends this quantity to his wife in Egypt, and another receives it from the estate of his orphaned nephews in order to maintain them by trading with it.[55] But despite the existence of such standard silk, the variety of silks on the market was so great that an inquiry into their prices is extremely hazardous. With regard to flax or indigo the difficulties are even more pronounced.

Research into the silk trade becomes particularly complicated because of its specific role in the finance of the Fatimid period. It fulfilled

a function similar to that of stocks and bonds in our own society. In other words, it represented a healthy range of speculation, while providing at the same time a high degree of security. When I read for the first time about such diverse shipments as oil, wax, and silk, or sales, in a little town, of cheese, oil, wine, and silk, I was puzzled. Later on, I realized that everyone, in addition to his substantial business, dabbled in silk. It was a matter of capital investment rather than of commerce. Needless to say, the Geniza contains many records of merchants who traded that commodity as their main line and in quantities of over a hundred pounds.[56] Nevertheless, the enormous popularity of dealings in silk and the subsequent profusion of references to them hamper the efforts to bring the entire material under control.

Yet the following notations on the market of Alexandria, which seems to have been the international exchange for this commodity, as well as those made in some other places, may be taken as fairly representative. The list contains the prices for 10 pounds (if not noted otherwise), and with the exception of the last three items, in ascending order. (1) 21, 22, or 23 dinars (around 1100); (2) 23, 24, 25 (not yet datable); (3) 22, 30 (1100); (4) 25 (1060); (5) 2-⅔ (per pound, same time approximately); (6) 28-¼ (1100); (7) 2-¾ (per pound, in Old Cairo, around 1040); (8, 9) first-class Spanish silk was sold in Tinnīs, the port on the eastern arm of the Nile, frequented by merchants from Asia, for up to 30 dinars per 10 pounds, and, once, even for 33 dinars (around 1075); (10) 35 (reported as exceptionally high, with regret that the silk was not sold at that time [around 1145]); (11, 12) in an account dated 1046, 11-⅕ pounds brought in Alexandria only 16-¾ dinars, or slightly over 1-½ dinars per pound, and 19 pounds of "peeled" silk were sold for less than 24 dinars; (13) in a court record from Old Cairo, dated 1098, 15 pounds of silk are valued at 15 dinars. Still, taken together with the details provided in note 54, the prices seem reasonably steady throughout a century (1050–1150), with a tendency to reach 25 or 50 percent over the standard price of 2 dinars per pound.[57]

We are in a less fortunate position with regard to the prices in Sicily and Tunisia, the countries of origin and export, respectively. At the beginning of the eleventh century a Maghrebi pound of silk, which had approximately the same weight as the Egyptian, cost 1-½ dinars, but at that time, as we remember, gold had a somewhat higher value than later in the century.[58] In August, 1048, a pound of silk cost in Tunisia again 1-½ dinars, but, as we have seen, two years before it was sold for almost the same price in Alexandria. According to the same account, Sicilian silk was worth, in Tunisia in 1047, 94 dirhems per pound, or about 2-½ dinars.[59] The same price for Sicilian silk is noted in Sicily itself about two decades earlier, and somewhat later we find even there the unusually high notation of about 3 dinars per pound.[60] So, for the time being, a detailed comparison of the prices of silk in countries of export and import is not possible. In general, it appears

that the margin of profit in this commodity was smaller than the one we assumed for pepper, a difference that might be explained by the usually smaller quantities and far smaller weights involved, as well as by the larger number of persons engaged in the silk trade.

*Flax.*—In volume of business, and consequently in the richness of information provided by the Geniza, no commodity can be compared with Egyptian flax. Tunisia and Sicily were the Liverpool and Manchester of the eleventh century with Egypt providing the main raw material, flax. Silk was traded in pounds and ounces, flax in hundred-pounds and in bales containing 350 through 600 pounds. The very quantities handled required that only professional merchants specializing in this branch approached it. As a corollary, we possess detailed businesslike accounts for commerce in flax to an extent not available for any other commodity. These accounts are full of technical details the like of which are not to be found anywhere else. Thus far, twenty-two different varieties, mostly bearing the name of the localities where they were grown, have been identified (discussed in n. 61). The varieties were frequently subdivided according to quality, sometimes designated by fanciful epithets, such as "Fayyūmī" [i.e., grown in the province of Fayyūm], specified as "a stroke with a knife," meaning perhaps "a hit," since something exceptionally good was ordered.[61]

There were three price groups according to place: the centers of the flax-producing agricultural districts of Egypt; the Qālūṣ exchange and other markets of Old Cairo and Alexandria; and the countries of import, Tunisia and Sicily. Actually there was a fourth, or rather first, stage: the villages where the flax was grown. We indeed see the merchants going to the villages, not so much to buy cheaper, but, as is repeatedly stated, to supervise in person the scutching and hatcheling of the flax, processes on which the quality of the fiber destined for export depended so much. We rarely read about purchases directly from the farmers. In one letter a young merchant is strongly advised not to make his purchases in the villages, but to reside in Būṣīr, where the same could be done more conveniently.[62]

It is not surprising that the countries of import should provide us with most of our information regarding both market prices and actual sales. The letter from which the following passages are quoted contains details about both and, like many a letter from Tunisia or Sicily, has much additional intelligence about the trade of flax as well. It was written around 1040.

"Flax. Mīsārī: 40–28. Tfīḥī: 45–33. Mālāl: 28–20–18. Fayyūmī: 28–20–18. First-class Fayyūmī sells well and the Mīsārī is the bread [i.e., the most lucrative article] of our place." [63]

The prices are in quarter dinars per one hundred pounds. Thus, the highest quotation was 45 quarters, or 11-¼ dinars, and the lowest 18 quarters, or 4-½ dinars. This wide gap demonstrates how precarious generalizing about prices of flax might be. The list of market quotations is found, as usual, near the end of the long letter (although the writer,

an uncle writing to his nephew, adds much good advice and sundry news), the account is close to the beginning, as was also customary.

Report of the sale of the remaining three bales of flax. Sold:

Bale 1. Qissīs Flax.

| *Price (per 100 pounds)* | *Weight (in pounds)* | *Total received* | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Quality I (35 quarter dinars) | 210 | 73 quarters | 3 dirhems |
| Quality II (36 quarter dinars) | 268 | 96 quarters | 2 dirhems |
| Total price | (478) | 169 quarters | 5 dirhems |

Bale 2. Total prices reduced because damaged by water.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Quality I (34-½ quarter dinars) | 198 | 60 quarters | ..... |
| Sold separately | 13 | 5 quarters | 3 dirhems |
| Quality II (35 quarter dinars) | 262 | 70 quarters | 1 dirhem |
| Sold separately | 61 | 14 quarters | |
| Total | (534) | 149 quarters | 6 dirhems* |

Bale 3. Quality not defined.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Quality (34-½ quarter dinars) | 448 | 150 quarters | 2 dirhems |
| Sold separately | 10 | 3 quarters | 1-½ dirhems |
| Total | (458) | 153 quarters | 3-½ dirhems |
| Grand total for the three bales | | 471 quarters | 13-½ dirhems* |

*Error in total in original.

In other accounts items of flax sold separately also appear. These were quantities too badly damaged by seawater to attain any regular price and therefore were disposed of in bulk. The price of three bales was about 8-½ dinars per hundred pounds, or similar to the average of the various market prices noted above. The nominal weight of a bale at the time of this letter obviously was five hundred pounds, as usual.[64]

One more account from Tunisia, delivered a few decades earlier; the prices are given here in silver dirhems, not in quarters of gold dinars. Most fortunately, the exchange rate of gold and silver coins in force at the writing of the letter is expressly stated. One dinar then was worth 40-½ dirhems.

Account of the six remaining bales [after most of the shipments had been stained by sea water]:

| *Price (in dirhems, per one hundred pounds)* | *Weight (in pounds)* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|
| 180 | 590 | 1,054[65] |
| 190 | 600 (Actually 575 because of water damage) | 1,084 |
| 180 | 576 | 1,031 |
| 180 | 590 | 1,054 |
| 180 | 529 (tare was 18 pounds) | 964 |
| 170 | 600 (the rest is damaged) | |

Thus the standard bale at that early time (beginning of the eleventh or end of the tenth century) contained six hundred pounds and the average price for one hundred pounds was 4-½ dinars.[66]

The account quoted was submitted to the prominent Cairene merchant Ibn 'Awkal. Fortunately, four other reports on the sales of his shipments of flax to Tunisia and Sicily have been traced. In one, which is particularly extensive, can be read details about 37 bales, obtaining seventeen different prices. (The document is partly stained with mud.) The prices range from 112 to 190 dirhems per one hundred pounds, and, since in sixteen cases the totals are converted into quarter dinars, an exchange rate of 1 dinar being worth approximately 39-⅓ dirhems could be established. The only variety called by name is Fayyūmī, ranging on the low side (as above, p. 224), with 110, 120, and 130 (three times) dirhems. The average price was about 3.9 dinars for one hundred pounds of flax.[67] The three other accounts or reports on market prices sent to Ibn 'Awkal contain far higher quotations and may be of a considerably later period. Two of them are on paper. To be sure, the one reporting the highest prices mentioned in Ibn 'Awkal's correspondence is on vellum. It runs as follows:

"Flax. Būṣīrī: 9-½–7 dinars per qinṭār (one hundred pounds). Ashmūnī: 6-½–4-¾. Good, old Mālāl: 280–270 (dirhems).[68] Other (Mālāl): 220–160." It is interesting to note, that in the same city (Qayrawān) and in the same business season, some varieties of flax were quoted in gold and others in silver. If we assume again an average exchange rate of 1:40, the prices for Mālāl would be 7–6-¾ dinars for one quality and 5-½–4 dinars for another, which corresponds to the quotations mentioned above (p. 224). In another account for Ibn 'Awkal from the same city, Būṣīrī was 8–6 and Mālāl 6–5, but both were described as selling badly or not selling at all. A letter to him from Alexandria reporting prices in Palermo, Sicily, simply states: "Flax in Sicily [the Arabic name for Palermo]—25 quarter dinars per qinṭār," or 6-¼ dinars. The letter apparently refers to the late 1020's.[69]

The most complete account of sales of flax in the Maghreb comes from the year 1024[70] and is very much at variance with all we have read thus far. It contains details for 23 bales, ranging in weight from 339 to 359 pounds, the majority weighing around 350, which must have been the standard at that time. With one exception, the bales were divided into two bundles, the majority of which differed from one another in price by ¾ to 2-½ percent. This method of keeping even slightly differing qualities apart is expressly recommended in letters.[71] The prices range from 34 to 46 quarter dinars for one hundred pounds, with 44 and above, that is, 11 dinars per qinṭār, forming the majority.[72]

From 1040 on, the number of letters preserved, and with them references to flax sold in Tunisia or Sicily, become abundant. During the middle and later parts of the eleventh century, 4-½ dinars per qinṭār appears to have been the lower limit of the poor varieties and 17-½

the maximum for the best, with 7–11 the average.[73] These great fluctuations are characteristic of a country's single industrial crop, the quantity and quality of which were liable to change every year. "The flax is mediocre or even poor and little in quantity," writes a man from Būṣīr, and at the same time announces an unusually high shipment of 17 bales from that small town to Old Cairo.[74]

Quotations from the flax-growing centers in rural Egypt or on the exchange of Old Cairo or Alexandria are not as plentiful as those from the countries of import. Another difficulty is that there are many quotations in bales, not in pounds, and we have already seen that the size of bales was not constant. In a letter from Būṣīr addressed to Ibn 'Awkal, a camel's load of flax (presumably then weighing six hundred pounds [see above]) is estimated as being worth 25 dinars, or 4-1/6 dinars per qinṭār.[75] A few decades later, the market price there fluctuated between 18–19 dinars for one quality and 16 and a price not preserved for a lower grade. The standard bale at that time comprised five hundred pounds, so that a qinṭār would have had a value of 3.2–3.8 dinars.[76] A detailed account from the same town and approximately the same time shows that at the time of lading, 14 bales (for shipment on the Nile to Old Cairo) cost 216-1/2 dinars, that is, about 15-1/2 dinars per bale, or somewhere around 3 dinars per qinṭār.[77] This is seemingly in perfect accord with the price of 15-5/24 dinars for one bale "including all expenses laded on the ship of Mujāhid," found in an account from the year 1046. The ship of Mujāhid is known to us from at least five other Geniza documents as commuting between Spain, Tunisia, Sicily, and Alexandria, and not between Būṣīr and Old Cairo. Thus a Mediterranean port must be meant here, the transport to which entailed many additional expenses. But bales on such seagoing ships were often smaller than those on Nile boats because of the ever present danger of jettisoning on the former.[78] Finally, by the end of the eleventh century, a hundred pounds of flax were sold in Būṣīr for 2-1/2 dinars, while the writer of the letter wanted to pay only 11 dinars for a bale, instead of the 12-1/2 for five hundred pounds he paid.[79]

The prices in Old Cairo were somewhere between those obtained at Būṣīr and those at the countries of import. Two bales of Būṣīri flax "all expenses included" in the Egyptian capital cost 45 dinars in 1057, or 4-1/2 dinars per qinṭār, and slightly more if the bales, as in the next case, were somewhat under the standard weight of five hundred pounds. The same account notes a price of 6 dinars and 1 dirhem for a Laythī qinṭār of flax, which is almost the same price because the Laythī pound was heavier by approximately one-third than the regular pound referred to here.[80] In the following year, 3 bales of Asyūṭī, each weighing 450 pounds, were bought on the Qālūṣ bourse of Old Cairo for 7 dinars per qinṭār, while a Laythī qinṭār of another unspecified variety cost 6.[81]

Our survey of the prices of flax during the eleventh century shows quotations of 2-1/2 to 4-1/6 dinars per one hundred pounds in Būṣīr, one

of the centers of flax growing, of 4-½ to 7 on the bourse of Old Cairo, and of 4 to 11-½ dinars in Tunisia and Sicily up to 1040, approximately, and of 4-½ to 17-½ later. Because of the great differences between the varieties traded and the contrasts between good and bad years, these quotations have illustrative rather than statistical value. All in all, the fluctuations of the market seem to have been far more accentuated in flax than in the silk trade, while the margin of profit was nearer to that recognizable in pepper.

*Sal ammoniac.*—Before departing from this elusive subject of prices, here is one example of a minor staple, a commodity that appears regularly in accounts and business correspondence but whose volume is restricted by its very nature. We choose sal ammoniac, a chemical very much used in medieval metallurgy for the process of tinning and soldering. It was found in Central Asia, and we possess Arabic, Persian, and Chinese reports about its mining, or rather its gathering. According to one Arabic geographer, it was found also in Sicily, but in all Geniza papers it appears as an article of export from Egypt to Sicily and Tunisia.[82] Its name *nushādir* (often spelled with ḏ), which is Persian also betrays its origin in an area outside the Arabic-speaking world. The rather frequent family name Nushādirī, trader in sal ammoniac, is derived from it. Sal ammoniac was sold in units of mann, or two pounds, the standard price being 1 dinar for 2 mann. In the following, an attempt is made to arrange chronologically a number of quotations for this commodity.

1. Tunisia (1000); winter; 1 dinar for 2-¾–3 mann (sold). No demand.

2. Qayrawān (1020); late winter; 1 dinar for 2-½ mann.

3. Sicily (1030); early winter; 1 dinar for 2 mann.

4. Al-Mahdiyya (1035 or earlier); midsummer. "I sold 72 mann for the price of 18 or 18-½ dirhems; total, with the deduction of the discount granted, 1,391. There remained 34 mann with which I debited myself at the highest price obtained, total 629; and waste, weighing 6-½ pounds, worth 7 per pound, total 45; grand total 2,065." The exchange rate of the silver dirhems was at that time approximately 1:36. Thus, the price of sal ammoniac was again 1 dinar for 2 mann.

5. Old Cairo (1050); summer; 100 pounds cost 27 dinars, again 1 dinar for 2 mann. The writer of this letter is the addressee of number 4, but according to the other persons mentioned in both letters, number 5 is from a far later period.

6. Qayrawān (August 9, 1052); "One mann costs 1-⅛ dinars," This and other prices were low because too much merchandise, both "eastern" and "western," was available in the city.

7. "In Qayrawān (1055), they sold sal ammoniac for 3 quarter dinars, which is an excellent price," letter from Alexandria in midsummer; this would mean 1 dinar for 1-⅓ mann.

8. Mazara, Sicily (1060); fall; "Sal Ammoniac: [Mūsā] b. Abi

'l-ḥayy sold 3 [pounds] less 1 or 2 ounces [for 1 dinar], or 1 dinar for 1-5/12 or 1-1/3 mann."

9. Al-Mahdiyya (in or around 1063); end of summer; "1 dinar for 2 mann. At present somewhat less."

10. Al-Mahdiyya (1070); winter; 1 dinar for 2 mann.

11. Al-Mahdiyya (1075); fall; 1/2 dinar for 2 mann. In general the prices were "quiet" and lower than in case number 10 by 30 percent and more.

12. Alexandria (1140); 1 dinar for 1-1/2 pounds (3/4 mann). "Prices like fire," or high, because many buyers arrived unexpectedly.[83]

With the exception of the last two items, which refer to unusual situations expressly mentioned in the relevant letters, the price of sal ammoniac evinces an impressive stability. In five out of the remaining nine cases, the market prices obtained were identical with the standard price of 1 dinar for 2 manns irrespective of the period, the season of the year and even the locality (exporting Cairo or importing Sicily or Tunisia). The prices in numbers 1 and 2 are what we would have expected in view of the higher purchasing power of the dinar at the beginning of the eleventh century, while numbers 6 and 7 indicate boom years with identical good prices. Assuming that in those years sal ammoniac was traded in Old Cairo at the standard price, the profit from the sales in Tunisia and Sicily would have been 33-1/3 percent.

The very form of the quotations deserves attention. They do not say: 1 mann of sal ammoniac costs so-and-so much money, but, rather: for 1 dinar, this-or-that quantity of the commodity concerned can be had. This way of quoting a price was common, in particular with regard to the main foodstuffs, such as wheat and oil, and has remained so well into the twentieth century. Another most noticeable feature was the endeavor to fix standard prices in round sums. We had 1 pound of silk costing 2 dinars, and 2 mann of sal ammoniac worth 1 dinar. Even more remarkable are the standardizing of the price of the *thawb*, the gown, or basic piece of clothing, fixing it at 1 dinar and the standardizing of one hundred pounds of bread at 1/2 dinar. This question and that of the prices of the commodities of daily use in general will be taken up in our chapter on the cost of living and standards of life.[84]

## F. MONEY, BANKING, AND FINANCE

*The nature of money and the business of the banker.*—This subsection will come as a disappointment to readers inured to the idea that banking during the Middle Ages consisted mainly of moneylending and that the Jews were the Rothschilds of the Islamic world. These concepts were fostered by an often-quoted article by Louis Massignon, the late dean of the French Arabists, which was based on a few data

about Jewish merchants of the ninth century granting loans to various government agencies in Baghdad. This article overrates the economic importance of the Jewish minority and gives an uneven impression of the banking business. In history books destined for the general reader, we also find exaggerated statements about the use of "checks" and bills of exchange in the Arab world of the Middle Ages. A more detailed perusal of the literary sources would have qualified such notions considerably. The evidence of the Geniza papers provides an altogether different picture.[1]

There seems to be a close connection between the banking practices reflected in the Geniza documents of the eleventh century and those known to us from Europe two or three hundred years later. This observation in no way implies that the latter were derived from or influenced by the former. Such conclusions lie outside the scope of this book. There is, however, little doubt that the Geniza is an important source for the early history of medieval banking. In view of this, relevant material from its documents is presented here in some detail.

The vital role played by the banker was a function of the monetization of the economy. But strange as it may appear, that highly monetized society of the Geniza period had no proper word for the abstract concept of money. The term *'ayn*, "substance," sometimes has this meaning, especially in the phrase *'ayn wa-'arḍ*, cash and kind, which is common in wills and designed to comprise all a testator left.[2] 'Ayn, however, generally denotes gold coin, as opposed to *waraq*, silver coin, for example, in the statement: "Received 10 dinars, 7 in 'ayn, 3 in waraq," and in many similar statements.[3] Thus, the occasional use of 'ayn in the sense of money only underlines the fact that the language had no specific word for that notion. The denominations of the gold and silver coins, dinar and dirhem, also sometimes stand for money. Other substitutional expressions are found in Appendix A.

This terminological deficiency reflects economic realities. Gold and silver coins were means of payment, but were also traded like goods: "I *bought* gold [dinars] in the House of Exchange." "I sent silver coins to so-and-so and he will take care of their *sale*." This is the way in which money was referred to in eleventh-century letters.[4] In principle, at each transaction, coins, like goods, had to be weighed and their value, that is, fineness and state of preservation, had to be determined. The idea of payment was expressed in Arabic, as it had been before in Akkadian, Hebrew, and Aramaic, by the verb "weighing," although a different Semitic root was used. Some deeds of sale state, indeed, that the type and weight of the coins serving as payment have been tested and found to be correct, while in a number of other documents the receiving party expressly releases the payer from that examination.[5] As might be expected, the records make mention of the procedure of payment only if, for one reason or another, it was not made entirely according to the law. Here is the witness of a banker: "Manṣūr

came, accompanied by two Muslims who demanded from him the price of a quantity of flax. He produced dinars and handed them over to me in order to weigh them in the presence of the two parties. I weighed and examined them and found among them fifteen 'Adliyya dinars" (special deluxe issues that were not supposed to be circulated).[6] Here, then, was the first and foremost role of the banker: he served as a clearinghouse for the making of payments.

Weighing and assaying were tedious and time-consuming procedures. Therefore, money was handled largely in sealed purses of coins the exact values of which were indicated on the outside. As is well known, a similar system prevailed also in the Roman and talmudic societies and, subsequently, in Christian Europe.[7] Two types of purses are discernible in the Geniza records, those that bore the seal of certified money-assayers, of a government office, or of a semiofficial exchange, and others referred to by the names of individual merchants. The following quotations are illustrative of the first type: "A purse of 50 dinars with the seal of the well-known banker in the Street of the Alchemists" (1086; the name of the banker is known from another document). "A purse from the Treasury—76-⅙ dinars; another from the same—53 and 1 qīrāṭ" (1059). "A bag from the Government house" (probably also meaning the Treasury; the deed is in Hebrew [998]). "Purses of [the House of] Blessing," containing 7, 9, 20, and 50 dinars, respectively, were issued by the Fustat exchange bearing that name.[8] The numerous items in bankers' accounts of purses of individual merchants might refer to two different cases. In accounts for business friends we repeatedly find listed on the credit side: "A purse containing such and such an amount of dinars bearing your seal," alongside with other purses unsealed, which seems to mean that the former was accepted without further examination. Naturally, a banker would act thus only for an accredited customer, *mu'āmil,* and we have to remember that many merchants were "merchant-bankers," who were themselves experienced in the handling of money. Such "private" purses could have had another origin. When a deal was made and the time fixed for payment had arrived, the purchaser went to a banker and had him weigh, test, and seal in a purse the amount of coins to be paid. On the purse he most probably added his own seal to that of the banker, and it was then called by his name. This procedure is alluded to in a passage referring to a seller who for certain reasons was slow in delivery of the goods. "I went to him with the dinars, sealed in a purse."[9]

As a rule, bankers' accounts indicated solely the real value of the dinars, namely their weight. Thus, the treasury purse of 76-⅙ dinars mentioned above most probably contained 80 gold pieces. Letters referring to purses sent overseas or from one city to another usually indicate both the number and the weight of the coins contained in them. In these consignments the weight, that is, the real value, was intended to be a round sum, whereas the number usually was not. In a letter from

Tunisia providing details about purses sent by one merchant in six different ships, the distribution was as follows:

| *Number of gold pieces* | *Their weight* |
|---|---|
| 308-¼ | 300 |
| 153-½ | 150 less ⅛ |
| 300-½ and ¼ | 300 |
| 255-½ | 250 less ⅙ |
| 122 | 119-⅜ |
| 154-¼ | 150 and two qīrāṭs (1/12) |

This list also shows that the various shipments varied considerably with regard to the value of the dinars sent. Those in the third purse (300-¾–300) are of full weight to a degree remarkable even for newly minted coins. The others are less so. In the first purse 308-¼ dinars were needed for the weight of 300, and in another letter, also going from Qayrawān to Egypt, 309-¾ were needed.[10]

The merchants tried hard to send dinars of full weight. A purse of 100 less ¼ 'Azīziyya, that is, dinars of the caliph al-'Aziz (975–996), was sent to the great Ibn 'Awkal from Qayrawān around 1020 A.D., and 100-⅛ dinars went from Alexandria to the office of Nahray b. Nissīm in Old Cairo, there to await the arrival of the sender.[11] We find that for the most part, however, people were not successful in this endeavor. In the year 1050–1051 a purse weighing 49-23/24 (intended: 50) dinars, but actually containing 53-½ pieces, was on its way from Tunisia to Egypt. And yet, at approximately the same time, a purse with 50 coins carried from Old Cairo to the flax-growing center of Būṣīr had the value of only 44-⅞ dinars. The Qayrawānese notable, Moses Ibn al-Majjānī, sent to Ibn 'Awkal a purse of "120 dinars in number, among them five in quarters, that weighed 117-22/24."[12] Sometimes, as in some of the examples previously provided, both the weight and the number were fractional, for example, of a purse going from Tripoli, Libya, to Fustat, with 116-¼ pieces weighing 109-½ dinars, where possibly 110 were intended.[13]

Close business friends occasionally left the testing to the receiver and indicated in their communication solely the number of coins remitted, for example, 50 in a letter to Nahray b. Nissīm (who was himself a banker), or "1,500 quarter dinars from the mint of Sicily [i.e., Palermo]," sent from al-Mahdiyya, Tunisia.[14] In such a case the recipient might experience difficulties when he happened to be in a small town, as we read in a letter from Būṣīr: "I received the two purses and verified the number of the coins, but not their weight, for I have no scales."[15]

The round sums of gold pieces most frequently contained in purses sent out of town were 50 and 100, but 200 (or 800 quarter dinars), 250, and 300 were not uncommon either. When an ingot of gold bullion, *tibr*, worth 90 dinars, together with a purse of 100 dinars was sent from

Sicily to a merchant in Egypt, the sender clearly considered investing a sum of about 200 dinars.[16] The purses traded locally were of a far smaller size. Twenty dinars was a particularly favored amount, but we also find round sums of 10, 15, 25, and 30, as well as purses containing only a few coins, such as 4 and even "2 dinars and 10 qīrāṭs" (in weight, presumably 2-½ in coins).[17]

Silver coins were not traded in sealed purses locally, judging from the preserved banker accounts. While going overseas, namely from the Muslim West to Egypt, silver was sent in purses of one or of several thousand dirhems, but nowhere were the number and the weight of the coins distinguished, as was done with gold. At the most, we would find a remark like the following: "I sent a purse of 1,000 *excellent* dirhems for you personally and another 1,000 for my lords, the Tāhertīs."[18] In a single letter are mentioned shipments of three purses containing a total of 10,500 dirhems, two purses of 6,000 less 70, two of 2,000, in addition to one of 2,000, and others, details about which have not been preserved completely.[19] A consignment of a merchant-banker in Alexandria to another in Old Cairo contained among many items in gold two purses of 2,000 dirhems each, classified according to a slight difference in the exchange rate at which they were expected to be sold in the capital.[20]

The absence of purses of silver coin from the bankers' accounts of the Fatimid period is to be explained by the fact that no dirhems were minted in Egypt during most of that time. To be sure, huge quantities of this specie were imported to Egypt from the Muslim West year after year, and some came from Arab Asia too. The Geniza, whose information is generally scanty on the relations between Egypt and that part of the Muslim world, does not provide us here with many details. In 989, a merchant from Nisibis in Mesopotamia carried with him to Damietta 1,320 silver pieces from the estate of a man who had died in the former town. In 1036, a power of attorney is given in Fustat for the collection of 1,750 dirhems in Tyre, Lebanon. More significant is an inquiry made around 1050 by an Egyptian merchant traveling in Syria regarding the "price" in Old Cairo of the Nizāriyya silver coins, minted in Damascus, of which he was carrying a certain amount. Thus we see that around the middle of the eleventh century these dirhems, coined in Syria before 996 (the year in which Nizār, that is, ʿAzīz, died), were still in demand in Egypt. During most of the Fatimid period, however, sizable transactions usually were made in gold and largely with the aid of bankers, while silver money primarily served for current expenses such as retail purchases and the payment of rent for modest habitations. Accounts of a cheese merchant from July, 1150, note outstanding payments for pounds in silver, but for hundredweights in gold.[21]

Needless to say, dirhems, too, were kept in bags. In an account from April, 1183, an administrator of buildings belonging to the congregation

of the Palestinians in Old Cairo handed over to the communal cashier two purses of 100 dirhems each, a third purse of 166, and a fourth of 42. These amounts represented the rents collected by him during the previous two months. He had put part of the money in round sums into bags, and left other amounts as he had collected them.[22] In later Ayyubid times, when gold had become scarce, we see a bank granting loans of four and five hundred dirhems, respectively, alongside sums of dinars. Whether these amounts of silver money were traded in sealed purses is not said.[23]

The banker's second field of activities, which provided also the general term for his profession, money changing (cf. *ṣayrafī*, changer), was not unconnected with the one considered thus far, namely the weighing and testing of coins and the issue of purses of certified contents and value. A great variety of coinages was on the market at a time and required expert handling. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the idea of legal tender was foreign to the Mediterrean society of the High Middle Ages. The local issue was regarded as the normal means of payment. When a Spanish handbook of market supervision instructs the superintendent not to admit any currency other than the local coinage, we might suspect that at the time and place the book was written it was necessary to enforce such an instruction, because in practice it was honored by breach rather than by observance.[24] But as far as Egypt of the Fatimid times is concerned, the testimony of the Geniza records proves that the idea of a legal tender, *naqd,* was a reality. When a payment is made or stipulated in a contract, the money—gold, of course—is described usually as *Miṣrī,* which means "minted in Fustat," and in more formal documents the dinars were defined as "of Fustat coinage and Fustat standard weight" or as "Fustat currency at this time." In a will made in Alexandria in 1201, a merchant leaves to each of his nieces (how many he had is not said) 10 Mu'minī dinars, that is, dinars of the Almohad caliph 'Abd al-Mu'min (d. 1163). But the same will comprised over two thousand dinars in Egyptian currency.[25]

The notion of "legal tender," *jawāz,* is attested to in the Geniza for Spain, Sicily, Tunisia, and, naturally, Egypt, albeit the word seems not to be registered in this sense in the Arabic dictionaries. Around 1070, two purses of 100 dinars each, "legal tender of Fustat," are sent from Alexandria to the capital of Egypt with detailed orders for Oriental imports.[26] A decade or so earlier another man wrote from the Mediterranean port to the same destination: "I sent you two purses containing 205 Nizāriyya dinars, coined in al-Mahdiyya. Kindly work on their change into local tender and leave the money obtained until my arrival."[27] From the term jawāz a verb *jawwaz,* "to convert into tender," was formed which was used both in Spain (by a local merchant) and in Egypt. In a letter going from Alexandria to Old Cairo during the second half of the eleventh century, 76 Ma'add dinars coined in

al-Mahdiyya are sent with the remark: "If they can be traded, convert them into local currency." Dinars with the name Ma'add, that is, the Fatimid caliph Mustanṣir, were minted in al-Mahdiyya as late as 1062.[28] "Eastern tender" in the language of the merchants of Tunisia, Sicily, and probably of Spain, too, was equivalent to the coinage of Fustat.[29]

The economic strength of a country was—as it is today—the prerequisite of a good currency. Easy access to the raw metals was another most vital condition. During the first half of the eleventh century, the Geniza letters chronicle an incessant flow of gold and silver coins from Tunisia to the East as payment for the products of Egypt, Syria, and the Orient. Around 1000, the depletion of the West of its silver money was so great that we find a merchant writing from Qayrawān asking his correspondent to buy for him Qayrawān dirhems in the markets of Fustat. When the country was laid waste by the hordes of the Hilāl and Sulaym, which also cut off its supply of gold from the Sudan, everything changed. "Sicilian" and "Rūm" (Norman and Italian) currencies and, above all, the Murābiṭī dinar take the place of local issues. In spring, 1064, a Tunisian merchant sends to Egypt Palermo quarter dinars instead of those coined in al-Mahdiyya, for, he writes, he did not dare hope that the latter would find a market in the country of destination.[30]

The idea that the local coinage constituted the legal tender was not easily defeated, even when the local government became very much weakened, as was the case in Tunisia after the Bedouin invasions of the 1050's. In the later decades of the eleventh century a much debased dinar was legal tender in al-Mahdiyya, although no coins seem to have survived from that troubled period.[31] The merchants coming from abroad were forced to sell their goods for al-Mahdiyya dinars with which they would then acquire money of international standard, in particular Murābiṭī dinars; which now began to replace the Fatimid currency in the Mediterranean trade. The Murābiṭ (Almoravid) empire controlled all routes to the western Sudan where the gold came from, and, moreover, possessed vast resources enabling it to maintain a steady high standard of its currency. From a letter, written in al-Mahdiyya around 1100, we learn that at that time it was still not easy to get hold of that precious specie. "I sent you 100 Murābiṭī dinars of full weight, their price being in the currency of al-Mahdiyya 267 less ⅓ dinars. I did not occupy myself with anything else until I succeeded in buying them. They are Bakriyya [i.e., issued by the Amir Abū Bakr between 1058 and 1087] and Āghmātiyya [i.e., minted in the town of Āghmāt in Morocco beginning in 1088]."[32] In an account submitted approximately at the same time the same Old Cairene merchant, his representative in al-Mahdiyya there "bought" both Fatimid and Murābiṭī dinars for local ones, which he had received for the sale of purple cloth, wool, and Oriental spices imported from

Egypt. The specifications given in that account are instructive by themselves:

| *Number of al-Mahdiyya dinars* | *Murābiṭī* | *Fatimid* | *"Price"* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 170 | — | 60 | 2-5/6 |
| 80 | 30-22/24 | — | 2-14/24 |
| 78-22/24 | 30-1/8 | — | same |
| 10-1/4 | Murābiṭīs, number and "price" not indicated. | | |

We see that around 1100 an Egyptian merchant active in Tunisia tried to obtain approximately equal amounts of Egyptian and Murābiṭī currency for his goods. He paid slightly more for Egyptian dinars and the rate of exchange with regard to the Murābiṭī differed in the two accounts submitted to him (1:2.666 and 1:2.583).[33] Again at the same time, or perhaps even a few years earlier, an Alexandrian merchant sent 13 "stones," or ingots, of silver weighing 2,900 dirhems to the "West" with the instruction: "Buy me dinars, Murābiṭīs, Āghmātīs or quarters [presumably Norman], but not one shred of textiles." The money of the West was urgently needed in Egypt because it was on its way to becoming the international medium of payment, and the Maghrebi merchants arriving in Alexandria began to ask to be paid in it for their goods.[34] Some accounts of a banker in Fustat from the later decades of the eleventh century seem to be based on Murābiṭī rather than on Fatimid dinars.[35]

Despite the predominance of the local coinage, money changing was one of the most common activities on the medieval markets. The reasons are well known. Governments did not always withdraw old currencies, for specie was scarce in general. Coins became thinner and less valuable through wear so that even the same currency had different exchange values at a time. Foreign traders sent or brought coins from other places, and local merchants doing business in foreign parts were eager to equip themselves with money accepted there. In general, currencies were accepted beyond the frontiers of the country of issue, but their value was not the same even in different cities of one country.

The Geniza papers include material on money changing, such as accounts reporting such transactions, and letters referring to coins sent from one place to another, indicating their value in Egyptian dinars, or requesting to change them into a specified currency. The coins were described either in a general way, such as "quarters," meaning quarter dinars coined in the Muslim West, or were defined more elaborately by the name of the ruler or the dynasty appearing on them, the city in which they were minted, some characteristic traits (such as whether the legend on the coin was arranged in parallel lines or in concentric circles), or several of these means of identification together. Often the quality was indicated by such terms as excellent, fine, gen-

uine, mediocre, or it was stated whether the coins were "fresh" or "old," the latter frequently being regarded as an advantage, namely in cases where a previous issue was of a higher value, for example, when a marriage contract dated 1241 expressly stipulates payment in "good old Miṣr dinars." [36] The details of number and weight have been discussed above. The following is an example of a fairly complete description: "Rūm [i.e., Norman] quarters, arranged in three lines, good ones, weighing 100 mithqāls of full weight and worth 58 [Egyptian] dinars." [37]

"Fresh," *ṭarī*, meant unimpaired by wear, hence having full weight. In a letter from Alexandria, sent around 1120, a Maghrebi merchant announces that a friend carried for him a purse with 101 fresh dinars weighing 100-¼, and asks the addressee to "sell" them, that is, to convert them into local Egyptian money.[38] The term "fresh" did not imply that the coins were new. It was customary to put freshly minted coins into purses, which were then sealed, thus preserving their full weight; as is known, the same was done later in Europe. A Qayrawānese merchant, writing from al-Mahdiyya in or around 1063, explains that he had changed all the quarter dinars received for his pepper in that city into "fresh" Nizārī dinars, coins that had been issued under the caliph al-ʿAzīz some seventy years before.[39] The purse of ʿAzīzī dinars, sent from Qayrawān around 1020, as mentioned above, page 232, must have been of the same "fresh" type. The coins of al-ʿAzīz' predecessor, al-Muʿizz (953–975), form the subject of documents dated 983, 1004, 1026, and others from the eleventh century; and as late as 1057 a banker's account in Fustat notes a purse with 10 "pierced" Muʿizzīs which arrived from Tunisia and was exchanged with a loss of only ¾ dinar in local Egyptian money.[40] The same banker sends Muʿizzī quarters together with dinars of the then-ruling caliph al-Mustanṣir to the flax center Būṣīr, which shows that those Maghrebi coins were accepted as payment by the Egyptian merchants at least eighty years after they had been minted.[41] The frequently mentioned "old quarters" and "old Sicilian quarters" were probably of the same or a similar early Fatimid coinage and had been preserved intact by being enclosed in sealed bags. Thus the terms "fresh" and "old," under certain circumstances might have denoted pretty much the same thing. The Norman quarter dinars with Arabic legends were called taris. One can hardly escape the assumption that this designation was connected with the term for "fresh" discussed here, namely that the custom of putting newly minted coins into purses, which then remained sealed, was particularly common with the early Norman issues.[42]

Numismatists and economic historians will have to cooperate in order to meaningfully explain the rich information about money changing contained in the Geniza records. The rates of exchange granted by the bankers clearly depended not only on the metallic content of the coins concerned, but on market conditions and commercial considera-

tions as well. This may be inferred from the sums quoted and is reflected in many express statements. A merchant writing from al-Mahdiyya asks his business friend in Fustat whether he should not send him his quarter dinars, since he had heard that they were worth more in Egypt than in Tunisia.[43] Maghrebi quarters, once very welcome in Jerusalem, at a certain time obtained an excessively low price there and their possessor was advised to forward them to Fustat, where the man in charge of the exchange would profitably take care of them.[44] The following quotation from a letter addressed to Nahray b. Nissīm is particularly instructive: "I sent you a purse with 50 dinars which are out of use [literally: have come to a standstill] here in Alexandria, but are excellent and first class in Fustat. Please exchange them for Damascus [or: Syria] dinars whose legends are arranged in lines, good ones, as I know you are accustomed to procure. I have made an agreement with your brother-in-law that your commission will be one dinar for a hundred [changed]. I shall send you another purse by the end of the holidays [a week after the writing of the letter]. Please execute the order immediately, for I need these coins urgently." [45]

The last three quotations illustrate another aspect of money changing during the Geniza period. Money changers were found everywhere. In Alexandria there even existed a *sūq al-ṣarf*, a changers' bazaar.[46] Fustat, however, was the monetary pivot of the Fatimid empire. It was the *piazza*, to use an expression familiar from European economic history, the trading and banking center that alone was able to procure all the issues needed by the merchants in their farflung undertakings and to provide them with a market for exotic, or, as they were called then, "wild" coins.[47] Orders for Syrian money, placed by Alexandrian merchants in Old Cairo (as the one in the last quotation) were routine, but we also find orders for silver dirhems, although these came mostly from the West.[48]

The *dār al-ṣarf*, the Exchange of Fustat, is referred to in the Geniza papers throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Its bankers must have had a semiofficial status, as is evident in particular from the many data we possess about one of them, called Abraham, the Son of the Scholar. A great many documents referring to Abraham or signed by him, dated between January, 1050, and December, 1093, have been preserved, for he served, like many other men of affairs, also as judge of the Jewish community. His address was "The House of Exchange, *dukkān* [office] of Abraham, the Son of the Scholar, the banker." [49]

In one letter he is described as follows: "He is in the Exchange and enjoys great wealth. May God preserve it for him and guard him from all enemies and enviers." [50] Such a wish, expressed with regard to a third person, normally alludes to a man connected with the government and in danger of becoming a victim of intrigues. He actually incurred such dangers, as we learn from a letter written by Elijah, the president of the Jewish Supreme Court of Jerusalem during the years 1053–1062.

Abraham evidently had become involved with a woman in Ascalon, where he sojourned on business, and his enemies intended to use the affair "to engineer his downfall at the government."[51] Admission as a member to the Exchange of Fustat seems to have been difficult. Nahray b. Nissīm, whose activities as money changer and banker can be traced through several decades, never succeeded in becoming one. In contracts from the years 1158 and 1166—one a loan and the other the sale of a slave girl—the occupation of several persons mentioned in them is given as "merchant, tājir [see p. 149] in the dar al-ṣarf." The term "merchant-banker," used by me, following others, to denote persons dealing both in goods and in money operations, seems to be rendered exactly by that twelfth-century title.[52]

The exchange rate granted by the banker was called by him either by its proper designation: *ṣarf* (from which ṣayrafī, money changer, is derived) or, more frequently: si'r, "price," or *bay'*, "sale," which were the terms used for the transfer of general goods (cf. above, p. 218). The difference between the Egyptian dinar and the foreign currency, which usually had a lower value, was designated by the term *waks*, "loss." The medieval clerk, in his predilection for variety, indiscriminately applied the different terms of calculating, namely the indication of the exchange and that of the "loss." To this apparent confusion the student of such accounts must become accustomed. One example illustrates this procedure:

Sale of Tripoli [Lebanon] and Hasanī dinars.

| | |
|---|---|
| 31 dinars | —Sale [i.e., exchange rate of] 20-¾ qīrāṭs per dinar (full worth: 24 qīrāṭs) |
| 20-½ dinars | —Sale 22-½ qīrāṭs |
| 8-½ | —Loss 3-¼ qīrāṭs [which means exactly the same as item one, namely an exchange rate of 20-¾ qīrāṭs].[53] |

The item "Loss" usually does not include the banker's commission, since references to it appear separately. Thus, in the account just quoted, the total of 60 foreign dinars was sold for 53-⅜ Egyptian dinars, a loss of 6-⅝, to which an item called "addition" amounting to 9 qīrāṭs, or ⅜ dinar, was added.[54] The banker's premium differed according to market conditions or other circumstances not yet evident to us. In one single account we find the following notations: [55]

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Change of | 145 | Damascene | "concentric" dinars. | Agio: 1-½ dinars. |
| " " | 100 | " | "lined" " | " 19-½ qīrāṭs. |
| " " | 139-½ | " | and 16 Egypt (to Murābiṭī) dinars. | " 1-¾ dinars. |

The average here was 1 percent, which was promised expressly as the changer's commission (above, p. 238). In another account of the same banker, 1 dinar is charged for an exchange of 67-5/12 dinars (the type

of money is not stated), but 1 dinar 19 qīrāṭs for 55 dinars 22 qīrāṭs Nizāriyya dinars.[56] For smaller sums, it seems, the premium was higher. Thus 9-$^{22}/_{24}$ Nizārīs, almost 10 dinars, were sold without "loss," since they represented Fatimid coinage of full weight. But for their conversion into contemporary, local currency a premium of a quarter dinar, 2-½ percent,[57] was charged. The still smaller sum of 4 dinars changed to silver in July, 1150 (approximately ninety years after the transaction just described) required a charge of 6 dirhems or about 3 percent.[58] It might be noted in passing that the regular term for the banker's agio was neither "addition," nor "commission," although both were occasionally used in this sense, but ṣarf, which as we have seen, was the general word for exchange rate and for the act of changing itself. The context usually indicates which of the three meanings of ṣarf is intended.

Specialization and division of labor, manifest in many fields of the economy reflected in the Geniza, are discernible also with regard to money changing. The many documents connected with Nahray b. Nissīm leave no doubt that he confined himself to Mediterranean currencies and solely to those with Arabic legends (which included the quarters of the Norman rulers), and that his specific strength was Syro-Palestinian issues. Nahray was a member of the Jewish Academy of Jerusalem, and, as a pious man, frequently made the pilgrimage to the Holy City. Combining, as the Muslims did on their pilgrimages, business activities with religious observance, he visited also the Syrian cities and became an expert in their currencies. Another example of specialization is provided in a letter to the Fayyūm, in which the addressee is admonished to refrain from all banking dealings with the government, but is advised to find a modest, but safe living in the change into silver money, *ṣarf al-fiḍḍa,* in which a partnership of two acquaintances earned 3 dinars per week.[59] The cooperation between many money changers, demonstrated in detail in the banking accounts translated in *Mediterranean People,* must have been due to this high degree of specialization.

Payments by sealed purses and the simultaneous use of different currencies alleviated somehow the difficulties inherent in a money market ruled by specie. These means of payment, however, were no longer sufficient for the comparatively developed and refined society known to us from the Geniza papers. Other techniques had to be applied. The economy of the period was, to a certain extent, a paper economy. Commerce, both wholesale and retail was conducted on credit. One did not pay in cash for the daily supplies, but sent the grocer written orders, and after a certain number—5, 10, 20—had accumulated, they were returned and payment was made. From a collection of such orders, presently preserved at the British Museum, we learn that together with commodities, small amounts of cash were delivered; the grocer served, as it were, also as banker.[60] In such a case we may

assume that some balance due the customer from a previous payment had remained with the grocer.

On bankers proper, we have a collection of twenty orders drawn on one banker during one month of the year 1140 by Abū Zikrī Kohen of Fustat. With the exception of one payment of 100 dinars, all the others are of comparatively small amounts, ranging from 1-¼ to 7 dinars. In six cases, the purpose of the payment is indicated, for example, for the purchase of a large quantity of grapes (needed for the preparation of wine for the household, not for sale).[61]

The form of such a medieval order of payment was very similar to a modern check. One has only to bear in mind that Hebrew and Arabic scripts run from right to left, and not, as Latin characters do, from left to right. On the left upper corner the sum to be paid was written in numerals (not in Hebrew, but in Coptic numerals, which are derived from Greek). Then the order followed: "May so-and-so [the issuing banker] pay to bearer [not mentioned by name] such and such an amount [in words]." On the left lower corner the date (month and year, not the day) was indicated and on the lower edge of the note the name of the issuer. Abū Zikrī used to head all his orders with the Hebrew word for truth, *EMeTh*. This was meant as an acrostic and abbreviation of the first three words of Psalm 85:12: *"Emeth Me'ereṣ Tiṣmaḥ* (Truth springs out from the earth)," meaning that any misuse of the order of payment would be discovered in due course.

Since paper was expensive, the size of such a note was small, approximately half the dimensions of a modern check. The one for 100 dinars mentioned above is slightly larger than the average (it measures 3 by 3-½ inches), but its text was as simple as that of the others: "Truth. 100 dinars ['dinars' in Arabic characters, the rest in Hebrew]. B [a letter forming an abbreviation of the Aramaic formula: In Your name, oh Merciful]. May the elder Abu 'l-Kayr Khiyār pay to bearer one hundred dinars for the house [i.e., the wife] of Amīn al-Dawla. Ab 1451 [July–August, 1140]. Abū Zikrī Kohen." The following order by another merchant has a more personal touch: "May the elder Abu 'l-'Alā—may God, the exalted, grant him success—pay to bearer in waraq silver one hundred and twenty-two. His friend [no date]." The name of the merchant, Abu 'l-Faraj, was written by the banker in the right (we would do it in the left) lower corner on a slanting line. Abu 'l-Faraj did not sign his name himself, because his handwriting was testimony enough to his being the issuer of the order. In letter writing, referring to oneself not by name, but by an attribute expressing friendship or gratitude, was a delicacy habitual among friends.[62]

Legally, orders of payment were a form of transfer of debt or assignment, *ḥawāla* (a word, by the way, from which French *aval*, endorsement on a bill of exchange, is derived).[63] We read much about this way of avoiding cash payment in the Geniza papers. "The purchasers of the pearls transferred the payment to those to whom they had sold aromatic

balls," writes a merchant from Alexandria, complaining that one of his business friends had succeeded only partially in collecting debts from the latter, and on his side was slow in paying 40 dinars he owed the writer.[64] The transfer of a debt was made before a court or notary. One such document from 1133 states that the ultimate responsibility rested with the original debtor.[65] Debts could be transferred to a pious foundation and even a government office,[66] but the normal procedure, of course, was to have them paid through a banker. "He [a Maghrebi merchant] sold part [of a quantity of flax] in Tyre and part in al-Lādhiqiyya [both on the Lebanese-Syrian coast]. He promised to pay the price in Fustat and transfered the debt to Nahray b. Nissīm for payment in excellent dinars of full weight. Of these, I received 13 from Abraham, son of Isaac, the Scholar, and the balance of 27 from Nahray." This statement of release was made out in summer, 1052, in two copies, one for the Maghrebi merchant and one for Nahray. Abraham, the Son of the Scholar, the banker about whom we have read (above, p. 238), acted solely as partial substitute for the latter.[67] This release illustrates still another aspect of the transfer of debt, namely, payment in another city or country (cf. above, p. 200).

How the ḥawāla on a banker worked in daily life is well illustrated by the following bill, submitted to Abū Zikrī Kohen, whom we have just met: "May our master Judah [Abū Zikrī's Jewish name]—may his Rock [God] preserve him—write to the elder Abu 'l-Khayr Khiyār [his banker, cf. above] an order of payment on 6-¼ dinars for 3 irdabbs of wheat. And Peace," and signed in full by the sender. Beneath this, in the right lower corner (leaving the left and main corner free), the receiver wrote: "Change it to his favor with your signature. Abū Zikrī Kohen," that is, sign the receipt in your name.[68]

The term for order of payment, *ruq'a,* is Arabic and simply means piece of paper, note. From this general term, the suftaja, a Persian word usually translated as bill of exchange, is to be differentiated. This translation of suftaja should not imply that the bearer of such documents expected to be paid in the currency of the country to which he proceeded, for the many references to suftajas in the Geniza never contain an element of money changing. On the contrary. One wished to receive exactly the type of money one paid to the issuing banker. "He owes me a suftaja on 123 Mustanṣirī dinars, 75 of which new dinars and the rest Syro-Palestinian ones," writes a merchant who had traveled to Tinnīs, the industrial and commercial center on the eastern arm of the Nile which was frequented by the Syro-Palestinian merchants. In Baghdad a traveler en route from that city to Cairo paid Maghrebi dinars described by him in detail for two suftajas he carried with him.[69]

Muslim lawyers defined the suftaja as a "loan of money in order to avoid the risk of transport." [70] As far as the Geniza papers are concerned, the term was used in a more restricted sense. Payment through a third party in another city fell under the general category of transfer

of debt. The suftajas were of a more special character. As a rule they were issued by and drawn upon well-known bankers or representatives of merchants, a fee was charged for their issue, and after presentation a daily penalty had to be paid for any delay in payment. Under certain circumstances, merchants and even government offices preferred suftajas to cash, but they were not always easy to come by. A respectable merchant from Alexandria writes around 1100 to the opulent purplecloth maker 'Arūs b. Joseph in Old Cairo: "I have sent the amount in cash with so-and-so. May God ordain his safe arrival. Had I found someone who would have been prepared to take out a suftaja in Old Cairo [i.e., to make the payment there] and to receive the equivalent here, I would have done so. However, I was unable to find any." [71] This sounds as if at that time no banker issued suftajas in Alexandria. In a letter from Qayrawān, written around 1050, the addressee in Fustat is urgently requested "to approach and to implore" Ibn 'Allān, a well-known financier, to accept ready cash for a bill of exchange to be sent to Ashmūnayn, so that the writer's representatives, whom he had left there in order to buy flax, should have no difficulty with their transactions.[72] In another letter, the *musta'mil kattān*, the government agent charged with the sale of flax in Būṣīr, is promised a suftaja on 30 dinars drawn on the same banker.[73] Finally, after having received 123 dinars in cash for the issue of a bill, Ibn 'Allān, as we have seen, was late in forwarding it to his customer in Tinnīs. According to Ibn 'Allān's customer, such a delay, if brought to court, was punishable by a daily fine of 5 dinars, which he waived, however, in deference to the great banker.[74]

Another banker of Fustat, Ibn Sha'yā (Isaiah) is represented in the Geniza by at least five suftajas drawn on him. His partner writes to him from Damascus: "Abū Manṣūr asked me to take from him 25 dinars and 2 qīrāṭs, which I did and for which I wrote him a bill drawn on you." [75] The same partner reports from the Egyptian town Malīj: "If our customer presses me to pay him immediately, I shall write him a suftaja drawn on you. Otherwise, I shall give him a purse of gold" (i.e., after two months or so, as usual).[76] This passage illustrates the cash value of the suftaja, which also explains why a fine was imposed on any delay in payment. "The bill arrived on the holiday [and, therefore, was not paid; it was payable, it seems, to a government office]. Immediately mounted police were sent out carrying an order for a fine of 6 dirhems per day." [77] The amount of the bill concerned was 120 dinars. Should we assume that a fine of 1 dirhem was charged per day for the delay in payment of 20 dinars, a favorite round sum (cf. above, p. 233)? This administrative fine, *tarsīm*, which usually amounted to a few dirhems, must be differentiated from the cost of a lawsuit, *tawkīl*, which the banker Ibn 'Allān would have had to pay, had his delay in issuing the bill been brought to court.[78]

No details concerning a commission for the issue of a bill of exchange have been found thus far. The fact itself may be inferred from the

following letter written in Jerusalem in or around 1052. After having reported that he collected a debt of 5 dinars due his Cairene friend, the writer continues: "This is not a sum on which it is worthwhile to write a bill of exchange. However, if you approve, I shall give the money to Arrajānī [a Persian Jewish banker] and make out a suftaja for only a slight loss, for he claims to be a business friend of Abraham, son of Isaac, the Scholar [the Fustat money changer, repeatedly referred to above]." [79] The meaning of the passage seems to be that the Persian banker would not need to buy the suftaja from a great banker to whom he would have to pay a high commission, but draw it on his Fustat friend, who would charge only a modest fee for this service.

Since the presentation of a bill of exchange required immediate payment, even great bankers refrained from issuing suftajas on large sums. The three Tustarī brothers in Fustat certainly constituted a most powerful firm (cf. above, p. 164). When an old man from northern Iran was on his way to Egypt, however, the Baghdad correspondent of the Tustarīs issued him a suftaja on 100 dinars drawn on the latter, and one on 50 dinars on another, also a well-known Fustat banker. For Damascus, which the traveler had to pass on his journey, he did not receive a suftaja at all, but was advised to produce the one drawn on the Tustarīs to their representative in that city, who would pay him after having contacted his business friends.[80]

The material about suftajas in Islamic literature, carefully assembled by A. Mez, shows that they could be sent over long distances, but only where direct and permanent business connections existed, such as between Aswan, the terminus of the voyage on the Nile, and 'Aydhāb, the port on the Red Sea, or Sijilmāsa on the northern fringe of the Sahara Desert and a town on its southern border in the western Sudan.[81] A similar picture emerges from the Geniza documents. Many letters from Tunisia show that the Jews of that country were very eager that their donations for the Jewish academies of Baghdad should reach that city safely and in time. But all they could do was send purses with gold to Fustat and have their equivalent forwarded to Baghdad in suftajas (or purses, at that).[82] We read that a gift to the poor of Jerusalem by a man from Toledo, Spain, was deposited with a banker in Fustat; how it was transferred there is not reported. The banker handed it in cash to the head of the Palestinian congregation in the Egyptian capital, and the latter paid the sum to one of the Tustarī brothers, who forwarded it to Jerusalem by suftaja.[83] We frequently read about suftajas on comparatively small sums of 10–19-½ dinars sent from Old Cairo to Jerusalem. Presumably, the issuing bankers did not charge a commission because the money was destined for pious purposes. Their reward was the prayers said for them at the holy sites. In one letter from Jerusalem, a suftaja on 10 dinars is returned to Old Cairo because the person on whom it was drawn disclaimed any obligation on his side toward the issuer.[84]

Nothing seems to indicate that these bills were transferable. When a bill, payable to a person in Jerusalem, but drawn on a banker in Ramle arrived, we read: "The suftaja has arrived. R. Abraham has asked him to cash it in Ramle and to pay the money here [in Jerusalem]."[85] Sometimes bankers granted advances on suftajas whose issue had been announced to them but which had not yet arrived. One such case refers to Tyre, Lebanon.[86]

Silk, as explained above (p. 222), was regarded during the Fatimid period almost like cash. Therefore, we are not surprised to find a suftaja issued on that commodity. The writer of an unfortunately much-mutilated letter explains that he had intended to send gold to the customer concerned, but was afraid that the representative of merchants in Tinnīs would find fault with his dinars; therefore he preferred to make out a suftaja on 30 small [i.e., Egyptian] pounds of silk yarn.[87]

A merchant-banker like Nahray b. Nissīm, while out of town on a business trip, could issue a suftaja to be paid by him in Fustat. Payment had to be made in time, though, whether he had succeeded in returning home or not. This is evident from a letter of his in which he most urgently requests a relative in charge of his affairs to realize a bill of his amounting to 44 dinars.[88]

Our survey has shown that the use of suftajas was fairly well developed, especially inside Egypt itself, between Egypt and its immediate eastern neighbors,[89] and between international centers such as Cairo and Baghdad. If compared with the circulation of purses, however, the remittance by suftajas appears to have been rather restricted. The reason for this limitation was perhaps the necessity for the banker to be highly liquid, which meant to forego investment, the very opposite of sound business, as the Geniza people saw it. It is particularly noteworthy that on the main trade route, namely that between the Muslim West and Egypt, no suftajas are mentioned at all, as against countless purses that went not only from the West to the East, but also in the opposite direction. In a letter from around 1063, a merchant from Tripoli, Libya, sent a *ṣakka,* or note (from this Persian word the European *check* is derived) on 200 dinars to Fustat. But Tripoli, at that time, belonged to Egypt rather than to the Muslim West, and in the same letter, the writer, who sojourned in Sicily, dispatched 400 dinars in cash to the same destination.[90]

Still, our statement that the Geniza documents to a large extent reflect a *paper economy* holds true. This was due not so much to the role of the suftaja, which was limited in scope, but to that of the ruqʻa in its double meaning of order of payment or delivery, given to a grocer, merchant, or banker, which we discussed above, and of the *promissory note,* to which we now turn. Promissory notes by bankers were regarded as cash. When Nahray had to realize his suftaja of 44 dinars about which we have read above, he did so with three notes worth 20-1/8, 18,

and 4-1/2 dinars, respectively and only the remaining sum of less than 2 dinars was paid in specie.[91] From the same letter we learn that he even paid for the toll in Rosetta and for his purchases on the flax exchange in notes, while he himself was in receipt of notes from the Mānak house, another well-known exchange in Fustat. A hundred years later, in fall 1162, a man who had farmed the revenue from houses belonging to a pious foundation hands over to its cashier 20 dinars, 17 in bankers' notes, *riqāʿ ṣayārif,* and the rest in gold.[92] In a similar case, in July, 1151, the total amount due—220 dirhems—was paid in a note drawn on a banker specified by name.[93] Such a ruqʿa could be sent out of town. "I sent you a banker's note in payment for the copying of the books."[94] These notes were negotiable, or, as our documents say, they could be "bought." We remember, of course, that the same expression could be applied to dinars and dirhems (cf. p. 230). In a court record from August, 1112, of which only the end has been preserved, a man bought with a ruqʿa worth 5 dinars two others, worth 3 and 2 respectively, and produced another one, also on 5 dinars. Thus, the total sum of 10 dinars, the object of litigation, was in notes.[95]

Naturally, a banker could issue promissory notes only to a person for whom he had received payments or, who had deposits with him, or otherwise was his customer, muʿāmil, an important relationship in the banking business.[96] It was customary to keep part of one's money with a banker. The sugar merchant whose deathbed declaration has been referred to above (p. 152), concludes his statement with the remark: "I have a deposit with Abū Naṣr, the banker, to the amount of 700 dirhems. They shall be used to meet my obligations."[97] In a list of about seventy pledges to a public appeal, al-Ḥalabī ("the man from Aleppo"), the ṣayrafī, and his partners donate 1 dinar, and so do two other bankers. Six persons, pledging smaller sums (1/8–1/2 dinars), among them a purple-cloth merchant, an apothecary, a druggist, and a female broker, refer for payment to al-Ḥalabī and Company, while others do the same with regard to three other bankers, also appearing as donors.[98] The persons referring to bankers during the drive did so because they did not want to be bothered again when the pledges became due. But we may safely assume that many made their payments in the same way at the time of the collection. Of particular relevance to our topic is a statement about the estate of a rich goldsmith made in August, 1114. As first item, before cash and before the jewelry, thirteen promissory notes, amounting to 1,054-11/12 dinars are listed. With the exception of three notes totaling 38-1/2 dinars only, all of them were issued by two bankers, father and son, known from other Geniza documents. Some notes were dated January, February, and June, 1114, respectively; one, amounting to 100 dinars, May, 1113; for the rest no dates are indicated. Most significantly, at the end of the long statement, there again appear promissory notes (of small amounts, ranging from 1/2 to 16 dinars). These were loans, or rather balances of loans, partly repaid, which had

been granted by the deceased to merchants, artisans, and private persons.[99] "Note and signatures [i.e., bonds signed] by customers," as well as "collaterals and signatures" are prominent in another document dealing with an estate, of which, however, only a fragment has survived.[100]

The Geniza papers nowhere indicate that the banker charged for his services as a clearinghouse for payments or for keeping deposits. His compensation obviously came from the advantages of having cash at hand. The depositor, on his side, enjoyed the benefits of convenient payments by ruqʿas, as explained above (p. 241), and occasionally he could also make an overdraft, as is evident from one account.[101]

What were the banker's profits from the cash deposits? First, we remember, the banker was a money changer, and for this service he charged. In order to acquire a stock of foreign currencies (which was not always easy to come by), the ṣayrafī had to have capital. He could invest his own money, as is demonstrated in the documents on partnership in banking.[102] In one such contract (from the eleventh century), the senior partner contributed 500 dinars, a sum that must be regarded as considerable, the more so as that banker was simultaneously engaged in other business ventures.[103] In addition, and perhaps mainly, a banker relied on the cash deposited with him, as is palpably evident from the case of a fledgling ṣayrafī whose own capital was negligible.[104]

Secondly, a banker of higher standing used to issue suftajas, which service, as we have tried to show, carried a substantial fee. Thirdly, he was a moneylender, an activity shown as being his regular business by the documents dealing with partnership in banking. In two such contracts, the senior partner reserves himself the right of granting loans, *salaf;* in a third, a former partner complains that loans were given without his consent.[105] We deal with this question of loans and interest, which is not confined to bankers, in a separate section, but one variety of loans was specifically connected with the ṣayrafī as the handler of specie and, therefore, must be considered here. One banker's ledger shows a great many payments of 1 dinar less 1 qīrāṭ or their multiples to 38 customers, all bearing non-Jewish names. This cannot be accidental, but suggests a case of concealed interest. The difference between the nominal and the actual weight constituted the banker's profit. The customer, as is known from numerous other documents, deposited with the banker a piece of jewelry or another security and drew cash whenever he needed it. The banker kept in his drawers coins that had lost some of their weight or adjusted the account in subsequent payments, as is shown in the ledger concerned in the example of a customer who appears in it ten times.[106]

Finally, a banker, like any other businessman, invested the money at his disposal in partnerships and commendas, and this was perhaps one of the main benefits he derived from the sums deposited with him. Nahray b. Nissīm, whose activities are best known to us, can serve as an

example. The material related to him is equally distributed between banking and commercial undertakings. This multiple combination of assaying, changing, lending, and clearing, joined with trading in goods, made the banking business very complicated. Each of these operations, in particular moneylending, clearing, and investment in commercial ventures, had its risks. We are not surprised, therefore, to meet with cases of bankruptcy. "Abu 'l-Ma'ālī, the ṣayrafī [a Muslim or Christian] went broke and died on the same day; he owed 1,000 dinars, of these, 600—to Jews, 27—to me," we read in a letter from Alexandria from the beginning of the twelfth century.[107] In a will made shortly after 1100, the testator notes that he had invested 300 dinars in a partnership with the banker Abu 'l-Ḥusayn al-Ḥalabī (not necessarily identical with the one mentioned above, p. 246; many immigrants from Aleppo were bankers), but had little hope to retrieve that money. Abu 'l-Ḥusayn's son, also a banker, died, after a prolonged illness, without leaving a penny so that the court had to fix child support for his infant daughter. The exceptionally elaborate style and calligraphic execution of the document prove that it was made in behalf of a family that had seen better days (Dec., 1120). In a fourth document from that period, a calligraphic and eloquent, but incomplete, letter from a provincial town, the dire lot of a bankrupt banker is described. He is praised as a decent man of excellent conduct who had done only good to everyone, but was unable to meet his obligations (a sum of 100 dinars is mentioned) because his customers, who were rough people, were remiss in their payments to him. He was brought before the head of the local police, flogged, tortured, and put into prison with his hands and feet chained for an indefinite period. The letter is an appeal to a notable to get him out of this misery.[108]

In general, the banker's vocation was highly honored in the Jewish community. Like those of the physician and the government official, the profession of the banker was called by its Hebrew name, not only in Hebrew documents, but occasionally even in those written in Arabic.[109] (The Hebrew word, *shulḥānī*, "the man with the table," is pre-Islamic; it is a translation from Greek.) Letters to bankers are styled in terms of great deference.[110] Communal leaders were often chosen from their ranks.

The need for capital and perhaps also the complicated nature of the banking business were conducive to cooperation. References to partnerships in banking are frequent.[111] In addition to the variegated activities described in the preceding pages, one contract imposes on the junior partner to appear in court for the company. Since a document had to be made out before a court or by a notary for each loan, and since complaints about tardy creditors were legion, such appearances must have been daily routine.[112]

A banker in government service, fulfilling the tasks of cashier (or

treasurer), money changer, and accountant, was called *jahbadh.*[113] As with the term *kātib,* "scribe," which could denote an all-powerful minister and a minor clerk, a jahbadh could be a highly influential person in a government or a little cashier handling three dirhems.[114] In a letter to the community of Ṣahrajt in Lower Egypt, the Nagid Judah b. Saadya expresses his astonishment that they had not yet settled a case of inheritance involving the sister of a great jahbadh, who acted for them at the government whenever they needed help and "out of fear of whose word they were treated with respect by their neighbors."[115] Because of the importance of the office, its holder could bear the Hebrew title *gizbār* ("treasurer," which, by the way, is Persian, like jahbadh), as we find in a document from Damascus, dated 1095, referring to such a prominent treasurer.[116] No wonder that a person bragging about this office where it did not amount to much was nicknamed *juhaybidh,* "little jahbadh," found in two documents of the eleventh century.[117]

A jahbadh was present wherever payments were made to a government office. Together with the toll at the port of Old Cairo one paid a small fee, called *jahbadha,* to the accountant.[118] The jahbadh at the flax exchange served also as money changer, handling large sums of freshly minted dinars.[119] When one bought flax from a government estate in an Egyptian village, the procedure was as follows, as we read in a letter from Fustat: "I paid to the jahbadh here and he entered 500 dinars on our account in the daybook [rūz-nāma, a Persian term] of the jahbadh of the *dīwān al-nafaqāt,* the Office of Expenditure. Against this, Bushrān, the jahbadh, took out official receipts and handed over to me receipts with his signature amounting to 200 dinars for the farmers of Dandīr [the village where the flax was bought], which I forwarded to you."[120] This Bushrān, who had his office in Fustat, dealt also with the suftaja of 120 dinars discussed above, page 243. The jahbadh of the Office of Expenditure had his seat in Cairo, but used to "come down" to Fustat and keep office hours there for the convenience of the local merchants.[121]

As common in the Fatimid administration, these jahbadhs were not merely government officials with a fixed salary, if at all, but were also permitted to engage in business on their own account. This is well illustrated by a large and carefully executed document in which the employee of a jahbadh, after the termination of his service, releases his employer from any obligation that might have resulted from their former relationship. Moses, "the fine young man, son of Yeshū'ā, the elder," makes the following declaration: "I have served our master and teacher Abū Ghālib Elazar, the Prince of the Munificent and Pride of the Noble . . . , in the jahbadha and also in sale and purchase, taking and giving, for salary and remuneration and have received all due to me." In his declaration, Moses releases also the sons and brothers

of his former employer, which shows that the jahbadha, like any other profession, could be a family affair. The document is from December, 1124.[122]

All references to jahbadhs in the Geniza are from the eleventh and early twelfth centuries. There are none from the thirteenth. Another term, which is not found earlier, becomes common in this century: *naqqād,* assayer of money. Since naqqāds appear in lists together with ṣayrafīs, we must conclude that their functions differed. Naqqāds most probably assumed, at least in part, the role the jahbadhs had filled in earlier centuries. At each payment to a government office the money delivered had to be examined; this would explain the term. Naqqāds are mentioned in lists of contributors (in one list three appear at once) or as persons effecting private transactions. An *'arīf al-naqqādīn,* or head of their profession, contributed once only a quarter dinar (he obviously knew the value of money). No documents illustrating the professional activities of a naqqād have been traced thus far.[123]

*Debts and loans.*—An unusually large amount of Geniza documents deals with credit. This material may be roughly divided into three groups. The first and most frequently represented type is that of the "acknowledgment" (*iqrār*), a legal instrument of a rather technical and abstract character. The debtor declares to owe such and such a sum to the creditor and explains when and how he will pay it back, often in installments. He stands security for the sum owed with all his possessions, including "his garment on his shoulders" (an Aramaic expression in otherwise mostly Arabic or Hebrew documents) and the same applies to his heirs. The creditor is freed from all oaths and, on his side, declares to have no other claims against the debtor. Sometimes special conditions are added, for example, that only repayments entered on the reverse side of the document are regarded as having been properly made, or (not common) penalties for delays are stipulated. All this is clad in extensive legal verbiage. The notion "I owe" is always expressed in a number of phrases, both Arabic and Hebrew, sometimes amounting to fifteen and more words. Of course, the general conditions of a contract, such as the mental and physical health of the party making the acknowledgment, his acting in freedom and not under coercion or duress, and so on, are present as well. Documents of this type never tell us under which circumstances a debt was incurred or a loan was given (or, indeed, whether one or the other forms the subject of the declaration), but they are not without value, inasmuch as they provide us with exact details concerning the parties, sums, and dates involved.[124]

The second group comprises settlements and special arrangements connected with previous obligations. Often a third party is involved. The complicated nature of the documents of this type is recognizable in the following examples. The banker Ibn Sunaynāt had granted a loan of 300 dinars to a father and son, each being responsible for the whole sum, which was to be paid back in six yearly installments of 50

dinars. The two served also as agents for the banker in a commercial deal with a third party. Together with two releases necessitated by that deal, the debt, whose contract originally had been drawn up by a Muslim notary and before a Jewish court, was now reconfirmed (June, 1129).[125] A merchant in al-Maḥalla had owed 1,330 dirhems (as testified in a Muslim *ḥujja,* or acknowledgment), of which sum he had paid back 1,017 dirhems. After the death of the creditor he claimed that each of the two heirs owed him certain sums, which one of the latter flatly denied, while the other made counterclaims. The court decided that the two heirs had to confirm their assertions by oath, albeit each by a different oath, while the debtor had to pay immediately the balance conceded by him (it was 107 dirhems). If he failed to do so, he would be fined an additional like sum payable to the communal chest (Jan., 1144).[126] The recipient of a loan of 260 dinars (on condition to return it in one payment at any time requested) delivers to the creditor a bill of debt on 100 dinars owed to him by a Muslim merchant. The Muslim was expected back from his travels any time, and since he was a *ma'rifa,* or business friend, of the creditor, it was assumed that the latter would have no difficulty in collecting from him that sum, which would serve as a partial reimbursement. Clearly, the debtor was unable to meet the stipulations of his contract (March, 1229).[127]

Finally, debts are referred to in a great variety of documents, such as wills, deathbed declarations, inventories of estates or possessions, accounts, and letters. These references naturally are not as complete as formal acknowledgments, but frequently compensate for this deficiency by instructive details normally not found in more technical legal instruments.

In two of the three examples for the second group of documents discussed above, the acknowledgments were made before both Muslim and Jewish authorities. This practice was widespread. The same Ibn Sunaynāt whom we have found granting a loan of 300 dinars to a family partnership of father and son, owed 440 dinars to a rich tax-farmer; the debt was acknowledged in two Arabic ḥujjas and in one Hebrew *sheṭār.*[128] Even when the beadle of a synagogue, who seems to have acted as a communal cashier, granted a loan of 28-⅙ dinars (certainly 30 coins were delivered) to the son of a Jewish judge, acknowledgment was made through a Muslim notary.[129] In general, Jewish authorities condemned and even punished recourse to Muslim courts, but they did not object to this practice of contracting debts through Muslim agencies. The reason for this leniency was obvious. Such acknowledgments, as we have seen, were negotiable, they could be used as a means of payments, and there was, of course, no point in confining them to the Jewish community. Why, then, were so many contracts of loans made out before Jewish courts, even when a similar document had already been issued by a Muslim notary and testified by Muslim witnesses?

The answer to this question is comparatively simple in such cases

where the Geniza document reports about an additional action with regard to a debt previously contracted through a Muslim authority. "A fine young man" owed to another one of the same description, a dyer, 660 dirhems, as attested in a Muslim ḥujja. In the Geniza document he receives an additional 155 dirhems from the same creditor and promises to return the total amount of 815 dirhems in one payment whenever requested (spring, 1220).[130] The physician of a battleship had granted loans in the amount of 26 dinars and "some seventy" dirhems to a Mr. Duck through an "Arabic ḥujja." After a "deep-searching inquiry" by a Jewish court into the financial capacity of the debtor, the physician acquiesced in being reimbursed in installments of a quarter dinar per month, which meant during a period of about ten years (Dec., 1129).[131] Another document reveals that a settlement providing for a repayment of a debt of 183 dinars during six years (15-¼ dinars at the end of every six months) had been made before a Muslim court. The Geniza document confirms this arrangement, but adds that all other records connected with the case are now invalid, and that the creditor's partner is to be included in the agreement (July, 1156).[132]

In general, however, we can only surmise why so many loans were contracted before a Jewish court despite the obvious advantage of having them registered in more widely negotiable documents. The subsequent discussion of the economic function and import of credit, as evident from the Geniza, will contribute to the elucidation of this problem.

Debts often resulted from commercial relationships. They represented the conversion of an agreement on deferred payment into a negotiable instrument. When one of two partners who had jointly built a house bought the other's share for 300 dinars, he promised to pay in three installments, the first after a month, the two others after five months each (fall, 1139).[133] A broker, simsār, received a loan of 400 "cut up" dirhems from a physician, who had sold him *qand wa-qaṭāra*, types of sugar and sugar molasses. In the thirteenth century, sugar factories became a favorite and fashionable form of investment, repeatedly mentioned as owned by physicians. The debt was to be paid back in October, 1225.[134] One document, of fifty-two closely written lines of legal verbiage, concerns the settlement of the debt of half a dinar owed after the purchase of 1-½ hundredweights of flax (worth about 14 dinars [1088]).[135] Other acknowledgments of debts also state that they resulted from sales to the debtor.[136] It stands to reason, however, that some of the acknowledgments even though they do not contain such specifications refer to similar relationships.

As for loans proper, it is useful (albeit not always possible) to distinguish between those given to help relatives, friends, or needy people, and others to finance commercial undertakings. Owing to the principle of having one's capital working all the time and other circumstances, even well-to-do persons were not rarely short of cash. "I take one dinar

from this friend and two dinars from that," writes a Tunisian merchant from a business trip to Būṣīr around 1050, "but cannot go on like this all the time." [137] Such a situation is vividly illustrated in a deathbed declaration made in March, 1182, by a person who obviously was suddenly overcome by a fatal disease. The most prominent intellectuals of the period, Jewish and Muslim, were his creditors: Moses Maimonides with 2-½ dinars and another sum that the testator did not remember; Ibn Sanā' al-Mulk, the Muslim chief justice of Egypt and poet laureate (who eulogized Maimonides in a famous poem) with 1 dinar and 12 dirhems; Ibn Jumayʿ, Sultan Saladin's court physician and renowned medical author and teacher with 4-⅙ dinars, advanced for the dying man's poll tax, who thus belonged to the class of the richest taxpayers, and the price of a quantity of wheat; another Muslim divine with 4 dinars; and an otherwise unknown gentleman.[138] No wonder that we find in the Geniza letters asking for smaller loans without much ado, either naming a sum (e.g., 60 dirhems) or not.[139] Requests for larger sums and those submitted by poorer people are usually accompanied by the offer of collateral.[140]

Loans for commercial purposes appear sporadically in the Geniza in the tenth century. The rich business correspondence of the eleventh century makes very little mention of them, so that we are left with the impression that they cannot have been of great importance at that early period. At all times it seems to have been customary for partners to grant loans to their prospective or current associates (cf. above, p. 179). In the twelfth century, and in particular in its second half, commercial credit becomes more prominent and seems partly to replace the previously paramount practices of partnerships and commendas. The following selection from the relevant material illustrates this development.

In May, 967, a Qayrawānese merchant receives in Old Cairo a loan of 600 pieces of nuqra silver to be paid back in Qayrawān immediately at request. The creditor, traveling to the same city, accepts as security 12 mann (about 24 pounds) of nutmeg, which he takes with him on his journey to Tunisia.[141] In a magnificent document, written in 974, a merchant in Old Cairo releases another from a debt of 85 dinars.[142] In an equally beautiful and elaborate, but mutilated court record from April, 983, a loan of 75 dinars is given for two months.[143] In spring, 1017, a prominent member of the Fustat Jewish community receives a loan of 30 dinars from a Tunisian merchant through the latter's representative, to be repaid after twelve months. In a postscript, written a year later, this representative acknowledges the receipt of 16 dinars and guarantees the payment of the balance for another year. The original document is signed by every one of consequence in the community known to us from that period.[144] Another loan of 30 dinars, to be repaid in ten monthly installments, is contracted in Fustat in summer, 1028, by a banker who bore a Tunisian name and, as we know from two other

court records, was married in the Egyptian capital.[145] All these documents are composed in the Hebrew language. In a letter from the same period, an Old Cairene merchant sojourning in Alexandria informs his correspondent in the capital that he had received a loan of 80 dinars ("in weight," *bil-ṣanja*) from a compatriot and asks that all consignments to himself should be turned over to his creditor. The letter overflows in expressions of gratitude for the loan granted, which seems to indicate that loans of this type, albeit commercial, were given as a favor and means of mutual help rather than for interest of any kind.[146]

This was certainly the case with regard to money advanced by relatives connected by common commercial undertakings. A merchant writing from Tunisia thanks his brother-in-law in Egypt for an advance granted by him for the purchase of 18 bales of flax, then worth about 700 dinars, while, later in the letter, he alludes to a loan of 300 dinars that he had given to the same brother-in-law, with which oil was bought in Tunisia in the same year. Again, in a different context, mention is made of an advance of 400 quarters to the son of his brother-in-law. Many, and rather exact accounts, some specifying $\frac{1}{72}$ dinar, are contained in the letter. Had there been any monetary compensation for the advances the letter would not have failed to list them.[147] A similar impression is gained from two extensive (but incomplete) agreements from the year 1066 between a nephew and his uncle. The first, dated March 12, states that all obligations resulting from the work of the two in the caliphal mint will be borne by them in equal shares. Moreover, the nephew acknowledges to have received everything due him out of his father's estate from his uncle and the latter's wife (who is mentioned three times), but grants him a loan of 1,000 dinars as a Jewish loan.[148] In the second document, dated December 29, the nephew acknowledges to have received back 500 dinars on Hanukkah (a holiday that ended the day before) and that the remaining 500 would be paid next Hanukkah.[149]

Craftsmen, too, seem to have assisted each other with interest-free loans. A Muslim *mayāzirī*, or maker of *mi'zars* ("waist cloths"), acknowledges—of course through a Muslim notary—in 1058 to have received from a Jewish mayāzirī a loan of 150 dirhems.[150] A Jewish ka'kī, or maker of cakes, pays back to a Muslim *farrān*, or bread-baker, a loan granted by the latter.[151] A Jewish glassmaker receives from another Jew, nicknamed *shaṭranjī*, chessplayer, a loan of 5 dinars through a Muslim notary.[152] We remember that such sums were sufficient to keep a small workshop running.

The scene changes in the course of the twelfth century. It is unlikely that large amounts, such as 300 or 183 dinars, were lent for a duration of six years, as we have found above on pages 250 and 252, without compensation in interest or service. The second of the two contracts referred to is from July, 1156. From the same year, another loan to be repaid in six years is attested in the Geniza. It was granted by a woman

to a man and his mother under joint responsibility. The original note of the judge says: "27 Dinars, to be repaid in half-yearly installments of ½ dinar." A postscript says, however, that the document, sheṭār, to be issued will state that ½ dinar will have to be paid every month during six years. This makes 36 dinars and constitutes outright interest of about 11 percent per year.[153]

Such a flagrant breach of Jewish (and of course, also Muslim and Christian) law has been found thus far only once in the record book of a judge. One wonders, however, whether such arrangements were not made out of court and even without the knowledge of the authorities, especially in the case of long-term loans. The following examples are perhaps such cases. Two government officials make a loan of 54 dinars, belonging to them in equal shares to be returned in monthly installments of 2 dinars, 1 to each (Nov., 1170).[154] A silk-weaver receives 552 dirhems, of which he is to return 10 in each of the first three months and then 20 each month. In a postscript, written seven months later by Abraham Maimonides in person, the monthly payment is reduced to 10 dirhems (spring and Dec., 1210).[155] An uncle owes his nephew 200 dinars and 100 irdabbs of fresh wheat, worth about another 200 dinars, to be repaid in five years, in addition to a sum of 6,690 dirhems which resulted from dealings of the uncle with his nephew's deceased father and which were to be repaid in various shorter periods (spring, 1214). Three other acknowledgments from the years 1214–1216 concern loans granted by the nephew to his uncle, one amounting to 600 dinars.[156] The stipulation repeatedly found in documents of this period that repayments were to begin with the Muslim New Year (the month of Muḥarram) possibly emphasizes the investment aspect of a loan. Accounting was made according to the Muslim year, and therefore income was conveniently adjusted to the Muslim calendar just as houses and apartments were often rented beginning Muḥarram.[157]

More outspoken than the documents are the legal queries submitted to Moses Maimonides and to his son and successor Abraham (in the years 1170–1237, approximately). "A judge administering capital belonging to orphans used to lend it to Jews against interest. When he grants a loan of 100 dinars, he writes '110 for the duration of one year,' . . . or he sells objects for 100 dinars and buys them back later for 90." The rate is approximately the same as the one in the record book from the year 1156 (above, p. 254). Abraham, to whom this query was addressed, suggests in his habitual kindness that the facts were perhaps incorrectly reported. Since anyone dealing with the property of orphans had to stand security for the capital invested, the observer mistook the profit for fixed interest stipulated in advance. In his very detailed responsum, the Nagid surveys the various types of interest discussed by the lawyers and concludes that taking concealed interest was punishable even more than fixed interest, because the latter, being such an outright sin, was practiced less than the former.[158] The most

common form of concealed interest—"the one approved by the most noble minds"—we read in a letter to Moses Maimonides, was deferment of payment at a higher than the real price, a procedure strictly forbidden by the master.[159] An outrageous example of this practice, also submitted to him, was the "sale" of three pieces of clothing worth 39 dirhems, valued in a ḥujja as costing 60.[160] The following passage from a letter to Ḥalfōn Dimyāṭī, the renowned India traveler, by his brother Eli, seems to presuppose the same usage: "I went to Minyat Ashna and took from the two illustrious elders [here follow the names of two Jewish notables] a sum amounting to 85 dinars, on which I 'advanced' to them 27 dinars, while the balance remained with me as debt. I acted thus in order to have plenty of goods and cash at my disposal. Repayment on Passover." The letter was written only two months before that term.[161]

Maimonides' responsa also reveal the importance acquired by loans for overseas trade. A merchant on his way from Egypt to Tunis, which had taken the place of al-Mahdiyya as the main port of Tunisia, had received loans, salaf, from eight different persons.[162] This is reminiscent of the Roman "sea loan." One document, in which an Italian Jew, Ser Misha'el of Trapani, gives a loan of 10 ounces of Dūqī, that is, Norman, gold of Messina, to an Egyptian Jew traveling to Sicily, provides the Arabic term for the operation, namely *bi-rizq al-baḥr*, "for business overseas." It also contains the condition, known from Byzantium, that the loan has to be paid back within one month after the arrival of the ship in which the debtor and his goods were carried. Thus, it seems not excluded that in this process of the replacement of partnerships by loans European influence was at work in the Islamic overseas trade.[163]

Fixed interest, called thus both by its Arabic and Hebrew names *ribā, ribbīth*, appears first in a legal document from Bilbays, 1239. It amounted to *20 dirhems per month* with regard to a debt of *36 dinars*, an annual rate of 16-⅔ percent. The interest was stipulated before a Muslim notary and the document referred to was concerned with a side issue, but, in an earlier period, no judge would have taken action connected with a contract based on outright interest.[164] The term ribbīth occurs again in a fragmentary letter from late Mamluk times.[165] In view of such scanty evidence it is safe to assume that within the community appearances were kept up and outright stipulation of interest was avoided. Very illuminating in this respect is a strongly worded letter directed against a wandering preacher who had accused the women of a city, among other graver things, of lending money against interest. The implication was, or course, that women were ignorant of the law and that those in authority ought to teach them better. This and other allegations are indignantly rejected as slander.[166]

Taking loans on interest from Muslims and vice versa was regarded as legal. During the eleventh century we read expressly only of interest paid by Jews to Muslims and this not for commercial loans, but for

debts incurred out of sheer want. The Jewish population of Jerusalem, which had become decimated during the terrible wars of the 1020's, always had to borrow money on interest in order to pay the poll tax that was imposed on it in a lump sum.[167] In one letter signed by ten residents of the Holy City and sent to Old Cairo around 1040 it is stated: "In the current year we took a loan of 40 dinars for the poll tax alone from the usurer known to you." [168] That Muslim moneylender could hardly have become fat through the impoverished Jewish population of Jerusalem. But those were the years when the Christian pilgrimages gained momentum, which certainly could mean good business for a local moneylender. When the Jewish Academy of Jerusalem moved to Damascus we read again of heavy indebtedness. A notable in Fustat who had pledged a donation for the academy is urged to send his contribution immediately; otherwise, the whole sum would go for the payment of interest alone.[169]

Cases of indebtedness of individual Jews to Muslims naturally are reflected in Geniza papers only under specific circumstances. A Jew from Alexandria, fleeing from his Muslim creditors, asks a social service officer in Fustat for help, first for mere sustenance and then for a start in the payment of his debts (around 1130). A clothier who had stood bail for an oil merchant who had taken a loan of 20 dinars from a Muslim and not paid it during four years receives from a Jewish court permission to sell at auction a pair of golden bracelets deposited with him by the debtor (around 1145).[170] We have read (above, p. 199) Maimonides' ruling that interest ultimately accruing to a Muslim was legally valid.

Loans on interest granted by Jews to Muslims and Christians are not very conspicuous in the Geniza papers. A document from the beginning of the thirteenth century clearly indicates that, at that time, such loans were a regular feature of the banking business. For although interest is not expressly mentioned, the very fact that all debtors were either Muslims or Christians is evidence enough that interest was taken. The same must have been true for the eleventh century as is proved by a report on the sale of valuable pawns deposited by Muslims with a Jewish banker.[171] An analysis of the account of a money changer from the same period induced us to assume that loans of one or several dinars to Gentile customers brought profits that could be regarded as concealed interest.[172] It is possible that a similar procedure was adopted for loans in kind, such as grain. An ancient list enumerates certain quantities of wheat (1–11 waybas, 2–3 irdabbs, also 2 irdabbs of barley) given to twenty-seven different persons, most or all of whom seem to have been Muslims. Seven of these were women, and in three cases other persons furnished guarantees.[173] "Loans of grain" were mentioned above (p. 117) as granted in Jerusalem. In that case, the borrower was a Jew who undertook to repay a quantity worth 3-⅓ dinars for one quantity the price of which was 2-⅚. It stands to reason that just as

Muslim moneylenders had their Jewish clientele, the opposite also existed, although the Jewish creditor was at a disadvantage, since the government would not act for him as promptly as for a Muslim. Anyhow, all this cannot have amounted to very much, seeing that moneylending to Gentiles has found hardly any mention in the mass of private and business letters, court records, and accounts preserved in the Geniza. Instructive in this respect is also a comparison of the responsa and other legalistic literatures of the medieval rabbis of France and Germany with those of their Near Eastern predecessors and partial contemporaries, the Gaons and Moses and Abraham Maimonides. While the legal and moral questions created through usurious lending to Gentiles occupy enormous space in the works of the former they play no role in the writings of the latter.[174]

All in all, it seems that in the period and countries considered, loans and deferred payments functioned not so much as levers of a growing economy, but rather were indicative of the perennial lack of capital as well as of bad business practices. Short-term loans were common. In Kislev (Nov.–Dec.), 1140—the day is not stated—a banker grants a loan of 14 dinars to be repaid "on the first of the coming month" and for this a large document is made out, which states, by the way, that the banker owed money to the debtor for a certain quantity of wine.[175] A term of three months was stipulated for a sum of 10 dinars in April, 1107, and one of three and a half months ("till Passover") for 32 dinars in December, 1126, with the qualification that they were to be paid "in one currency and [coins of] one weight."[176]

The Geniza people had no need of Balzac to learn the art of not paying one's debts. Repeatedly, mention has been made in this book of the pernicious habits of procrastination and delay of payment.[177] The more important a person was the more difficult it was to enforce payment. *Mediterranean People* contains a letter in which a notable is first congratulated on an approaching holiday on which his debt was due and then is asked in the most deferential terms to pay since the sum was owed to a third person and the writer had no other assets. Otherwise he would never have had the impudence of asking for payment.[178] Defaults are often described as gravely harming the creditor's business operations. The following passage from a letter from Tunisia suffices to illustrate: "My brother and lord, you know how much master Abū Isḥāq Abraham b. Burayk loves you—may God preserve him for all of us. He asked me to write to you with regard to your debts to him, may God preserve you. You know, my brother and lord, that he most urgently wants to travel to Spain and nothing keeps him here in Qayrawān except what you still owe him. So please, my brother and lord, act in accordance with the excellence of your noble character and send him what you owe him, either overland or by sea. This is absolutely imperative. I need not urge you more in this matter."[179] In another letter, a merchant, on the eve of his departure from Qayrawān, entreats his business

correspondent in Fustat to continue collecting the sums owed him. He was going to stay in Spain for a long time and hoped that "until we will be united again, God will have collected that money through you." Obviously, a miracle of heavenly intervention was needed to make people pay.[180]

In view of this situation, creditors sought to protect themselves through collaterals, which are referred to in the Geniza papers with unusual frequency. Everything could serve as collateral: gold and silver vessels, jewelry, clothing of all description, for poorer people even bedding and household goods, books, very common, but, above all, houses, that is, the property titles and transfer deeds were mortgaged. In extreme cases, children were pledged. Such an occurrence in Ascalon, Palestine, during its occupation by the Crusaders (1153–1187), should not be taken as specific to Frankish law or custom,[181] because similar cases are reported for Tunisia in the 1080's and even for Egypt slightly later. A widow writing from al-Mahdiyya to her brother at the time of the Norman invasions exculpates herself for giving away her little daughter as a pledge by the remark that in those dire days even free persons were sold as slaves.[182] In an appeal to a congregation in Fustat, a blind woman recounts that she had to pay a Muslim physician who treated her daughter for dropsy 4 dinars, for which sum she had pledged her other children. How many is not said. I suppose, it was one.[183]

The value of the collateral usually exceeded by far the amount of the credit granted. A house was mortgaged for a loan of 10 dinars in 1135, half a house for 15 dinars lent for two months in 1156, two thirds of two shops with upper apartments for 500 dirhems in 1220.[184] A complete Bible codex, the average price of which was 20 dinars, was pawned for a loan of 6 dinars in 1027, two treatises of the Talmud for 20 dirhems around 1220, seven pieces of precious clothing for 4 dinars in 1213, and so on.[185] A merchant who had pledged four books for a debt of 5-⅛ dinars resulting from a deal in indigo writes from a journey to his creditor to sell the books and to return the balance to his son; obviously, he was sure that the books would obtain a far higher price than the amount owed by him (1178).[186] All the assets in the will of a female broker, which amounted to the considerable sum of 322 dinars were, with the exception of 80 dinars lent to a friend, covered by "securities and pawns" deposited with her.[187] Several Geniza records permit the creditor to sell the objects confided to him.[188] In one banker's account we see in fact that pawns of very high value were used in this way.[189]

Another means to secure payment was the severe punishment, including long imprisonment and torture, meted out to tardy debtors, when brought before a Muslim court.[190] The Jewish court had no power for such measures, but also took a strong stand and, in extreme cases, went so far as to excommunicate a member evading his obligations,[191] or to reserve themselves the right to "extradite" him to the Muslim

authorities.[192] In view of the seriousness and delicacy of such alternatives, the head of the Jewish community in Egypt used to attend to cases of insolvent debtors in person, and various documents to this effect have been preserved.[193] An autograph letter by the Gaon Maṣlīaḥ (Head, 1127–1139) strongly advises the head of the Jewish congregation in Malīj to arrange for the settlement of a debt due in that place "so that the complainant should not need to appeal again" (namely to the Gaon).[194] In a most elaborate document from January, 1133, a debt resulting from a partnership and subsequently from business done after the death of one of the partners with the latter's son is settled before Maṣlīaḥ in person and he validates in his own hand the testimony in a later session. The settlement was reached through the intervention of "upright and pious elders" and stipulated that payment was to be made in forty installments of 1 dinar per month over a period of three and a quarter years.[195]

Repayment in installments is so prominent in our sources that it needs to be considered in some detail. Monthly installments of 1 dinar must have been popular, since, besides the case just mentioned, six others have been noted, the earliest being a Karaite document of release from November, 1030. The sums concerned range from 11 to 47 dinars, the larger found in an inventory written during the years 1162–1164. That entry is noteworthy on two counts. The writer states that the agreement on installments of 1 dinar was made in a Muslim ḥujja, but still the debtor had not paid a penny. We see that such settlements, which are so common in Jewish records, were also made before Muslim authorities, and that in case of default the creditor was reluctant to take recourse to the law.[196]

Government itself consented to receive in installments the debts due it. When two tax-farmers, father and son, were unable to meet their obligations and another took over from them, he was allowed to pay their debt of 80 dinars in four years, albeit the yearly sum to be advanced by him to the government in respect of the revenue to be collected by him was as much as 335 dinars (July–Aug., 1147).[197] Repayment distributed over four years is foreseen also in a rather complicated settlement from spring, 1092. A debtor promises to pay 40 out of 101 dinars on the forthcoming Passover holiday which fell a week after the signature of the document. The balance of 61 dinars was to be paid in 48 monthly installments by 'Ullā b. Joseph, a prominent merchant and communal officer, and in case he moved to another city, by another notable. How these two gentlemen would be compensated by the debtor certainly was stated in another record. In any case, this agreement well illustrates how the merchants assisted their faltering companions.[198] When the maker of purple cloth 'Arūs b. Joseph, who was renowned for his generosity, granted a loan of 11 dinars to a person from Ramle, Palestine, to be returned in 66 monthly installments of ⅙ dinar during

five and a half years, we may assume that he wanted to help the man, presumably a refugee from the Seljuks, to develop a small business or workshop (May, 1088).[199] Of a similar purpose were perhaps loans of 5 and 10 dinars, respectively, to be repaid in monthly installments of ⅓ and ½ dinar (Oct., 1090, and summer, 1156).[200] When, however, we read in a letter from Alexandria, written around 1080, that a loan or debt of 106 dinars was to be repaid in weekly rates of 10 dinars, and that the addressee in Fustat was asked to collect one installment due, the tenor of the letter shows that the arrangement was entirely business-like, and that no difficulties were expected over the collection.[201]

In a petition to a Fatimid vizier, a Muslim baker, hard pressed by a creditor, humbly asks to be permitted to repay his debt in installments, *taqsīṭ*, "so that he may be enabled to remain in his native city, to support his family and to regain a new lease on life." Upon the order of the vizier, "the secretary of the fine pen" and then, with some enlargements, "the secretary of the thick pen" instruct the qadi to investigate the petitioner's circumstances and to look into his case in accordance with the exigencies of the religious law and public welfare. The document, which came into the Geniza perhaps because the poor baker sought help from a Jewish friend, shows that even the highest authorities were troubled with requests for payments of debts in installments. The unusually large number of documents dealing with this matter found in the Geniza is to be explained in the light of this fact.[202]

The reverse side of bills of debt sometimes reveals how payment in installments actually worked. A glaring example of discrepancies between conditions stipulated and those fulfilled is provided in Appendix C, section 12 (1143). A document almost contemporary with the latter provides a different picture. A communal official had taken a loan of 11 dinars for the community to be returned in 11 monthly installments. The back of the leaf contains the following three entries: "Received from Sālim, the beadle who farmed the revenue from the communal houses—three dinars out of the sum due. Acknowledged by the above-mentioned creditor. Valid." "Received two dinars exactly, out of that sum." "Also received six dinars. Nothing due any more from this bill." Here, but only here, there follow date (exactly twelve months after the loan was granted, 1146) and place (Fustat) and the signatures of the judge and two assessors.[203] In 1265, a banker gives a loan of 377 excellent nuqra silver dirhems to the proprietor of a sugar factory, to be paid back in weekly installments of 25 pieces. The reverse side contains two entries. One, written and signed by David, the grandson of Moses Maimonides, acknowledges a payment of 50 nuqra, which is followed by a declaration of the banker that he transfers the remaining debt of 327 dirhems to his wife. A second entry notes a payment of 75 dirhems.[204] Should we infer from such occurrences that the stipulation of weekly or monthly installments was taken with a grain of salt by both

sides? Thus far, we have never happened to find on the back of a document a full list of payments, arranged according to weeks or months, as stipulated on its front.

Before leaving this vast subject of credit it seems appropriate to summarize its main features:

1. Sale on credit was the normal business procedure. It is treated in our section on commerce, pages 197–200, above.

2. Loans often were nothing but an extension of the usually deferred payment.

3. Borrowing relatively small, but not always quite so small, amounts from friends, even from members of another faith, was commonplace.

4. Merchants and craftsmen assisted each other with substantial loans, for which, as far as the evidence of the eleventh-century documents goes, no interest was taken. It was also a customary form of charity to grant loans large enough for conducting a small business or workshop through a number of years.

5. Muslims lent Jews money on fixed interest during the eleventh century. In all documents preserved, the money was borrowed not for business purposes, but because of sheer want.

6. During the same period, and also later, Jewish bankers gave secured and unsecured loans to Muslims. It stands to reason that they, too, charged interest, although this is not expressly stated. Concealed interest was assumed in the cases of small amounts of money or of wheat and barley regularly lent to customers.

7. Deposits with bankers, as is proved by the paramount economic importance of bankers notes, must have been frequent. But they were short-term, and there is no indication of interest granted by the banker or of a compensation paid to him for his services.

8. Concealed and even outright interest for regular commercial loans make their appearance around the middle of the twelfth century. Loans begin to replace commendas and partnerships in the overseas trade. The "sea loan" was perhaps taken over from Europe.

9. Collateral was varied, and more often than not repayment in installments, sometimes extending to periods of six years, was stipulated. Some such stipulations probably contained an element of concealed interest, especially in later times. On the other hand, in many cases, the wording of the documents concerned indicates that payment in installments was granted because the debtor otherwise would have been unable to meet his obligations.

10. Declarations of debt were negotiable, for which reason it was preferable to have them made out by a Muslim, that is, state, authority. In addition to the Muslim document, loans were often also certified by a Jewish court, and, in many cases, even solely by it, which underlines their basic character of mutual help and even charity.

*Investment and hoarding.*—Our study of the Geniza documents related to industry, agriculture, commerce, and banking, has shown how the people of that period put their money to work. In the following we try to integrate this knowledge with the aid of inventories drawn up on various occasions, particularly those accompanying a will or the settlement of an estate. By their very nature, such inventories tend to include all or most of the possessions of the person concerned.

Two principles of sound finance were evident throughout the preceding chapters: one should never let one's money idle, but invest it in profitable undertakings, and secondly, one should spread the risk and participate in a great many ventures of limited scope. The inventories show that, on the one hand, these principles were closely followed, and, on the other, utterly disregarded, or rather offset by other, opposing principles.

A merchant, returning, it seems, from overseas and embarking on another prolonged journey, lists twenty-seven assets totaling about 460 dinars regarding which action had to be taken. At the end of the long statement he remarks: "Other debts are due me from both Jews and Muslims, some of which are certified by a notary and some are not. They are noted in my account book." This concluding remark obviously refers to items the collection of which was not expected to encounter difficulties. The assets were rents of houses, stores, and a workshop in two different towns, while the family house, of which half belonged to the writer, was in a third town; also loans, especially those given to tax-farmers who had to advance money to the government, balances from commercial ventures, and income from a partnership in a sugar mill. Thus, this list is a perfect illustration of the two principles of sound finance referred to above (1165).[205] The same holds true for the estate of a substantial tax-farmer despite the fact that only the concluding three columns have been preserved. Fifteen loans, mostly granted in round sums such as 50, 100, 150, or 200 dinars, amounted to about 1,240 dinars, while ten purses of cash totaled less than 140. Some of these purses contained currencies of a specific type, for example, 10 Ibrāhīmiyya dinars (of the Almoravid crown prince Ibrāhīm b. Tashfīn, coined in the years 1144–1145[206]) or 1,800 "fresh" dirhems, or a paper bag with 5-⅓ dinars of "broken gold," fragments of dinars. A third group of possessions was nine pieces of gold and silver jewelry, amounting, according to the price known to us from other sources, to 60–80 dinars. Additional pieces of jewelry are listed as pawns for loans. Only smaller loans, such as one of 18-¾ dinars (in weight, presumably presenting 20 coins in number) were covered by such a means of security. All in all we see that this farmer of the taxes on the weaving and dyeing of silk, who at his death owed the government 125 dinars, did not let his money idle. Besides his main occupation, he invested in a great number of diversified loans. There is only one very large item among them, one of 440 dinars, entrusted to the banker Ibn Sunaynāt

(see p. 251, above).[207] A statement accompanying a will and comprising eleven assets of a total value of 204-¾ dinars and 140 dirhems may reflect a similar tendency of diversified investment, but the will belonging to this statement has not yet been found.[208]

A somewhat different picture emerges from an inventory drawn up by a merchant in a document in which he appointed his infant daughter as his sole heir. He enumerates seventeen assets amounting to about 350 dinars, among them a number of astonishingly small shares in partnerships for business trips to Yemen. In conclusion, however, he mentions in addition having invested 300 dinars in a partnership with a banker who had become insolvent. In this case the principle of spreading the risk was not observed, possibly because banking once had been the writer's main occupation (around 1100).[209] Similarly, an estate consisting of 1,937 jars of wine (worth about 200–300 dinars), 48 pieces of gold, and a slave girl worth 19 dinars betrays a man who derived his livelihood from the production and sale of that beverage (1150 or shortly thereafter).[210] It is also natural that craftsmen should invest all their modest means in materials for their work. The rather detailed will of a silk-weaver, the father of four sons, shows indeed that besides half a house and his instruments, which seem to have been valuable, all his assets consisted in raw materials and half-finished products. To be sure, silk in those days was almost like cash (Dec., 1188).[211]

Still other considerations seem to have prevailed in the counsels leading to the following documents. A man on his deathbed declares that he owes the large sum of 238 dinars to a banker. This obligation should be met by the sale of a quantity of sugar stored with the proprietor of a sugar mill while the balance of the sale's proceeds should be paid to the testator's son. The banker and the industrialist were entrusted jointly with the execution of the sale. Investment in sugar, as has often been stated here, had become popular and fashionable in the thirteenth century. Remarkable about this deathbed declaration is the unusually large quantity of one commodity turned over to a single business friend (Nov., 1203).[212] Similar is the case of the rich goldsmith whose estate of August, 1114, shows that almost all his assets, over a thousand dinars, were kept in one bank (father and son).[213] There must have been compelling reasons for this deviation from the principle of spreading the risk, perhaps old age, which made the laborious task of supervision too burdensome.

There is another most remarkable trait in this inventory of the rich goldsmith. We know from literary sources that the Muslim rulers used to hoard huge quantities of gold and silver coins. It was customary to note in the obituary of a caliph or sultan how much cash he left in the treasury at his death.[214] It stands to reason that in this, as in other matters, the subjects followed the example of their rulers. Our document is a point in case. Besides jewelry and some bars of silver and gold, which were probably needed in the goldsmith's workshop,

he left 400 (less ½!) "fresh" dinars and "a second cash sum" of 54-⅙ "old" dinars, which represented a very considerable fraction of his fortune. With this, compare the will of a female broker, made around 1100. Out of a total of assets of 689 dinars, there was 300 gold pieces "in cash presently with me" (again a round sum!), in addition to 67 dinars deposited with another lady. Besides, there was other, not specified, cash in the house.[215] Thus we see that certain people, especially those who were near death either because of old age or poor health, well-to-do people, of course, preferred to hoard hard cash in quantities representing a very substantial part of their wealth. By its very nature this economic attitude required utmost secrecy. Otherwise, we would certainly have learned more about it from the Geniza. Coins used to be buried. A Geniza document recounts the story of a particular type of dinars excavated near the Qubba mosque in the Fortress of the Greeks in Fustat, a Jewish neighborhood.[216] When the ramparts of the Alhambra of Granada, Spain, were constructed, a jug containing 3,000 mithqāls was unearthed at the former location of the house of a Jew who had served as a treasurer to a ruler of that city.[217] Future students of the Geniza should be advised however, that the cash sums so frequently appearing in settlements for orphans mostly do not represent the actual estate left to them. Rather it was the policy of the Jewish courts to realize all the assets of the deceased and to sell his inventory immediately after his demise, entrusting the proceeds to a reliable and financially strong "trustee."

In times of insecurity and political unrest even commercial cash receipts were confided to the earth. In a letter written in Qayrawān on August 9, 1052, a merchant informs his brother in Alexandria that the payments for the Egyptian flax sent by the addressee were collected only with greatest difficulty, and then, he adds in Hebrew, "I hid them in the earth." He knew that his brother would be dissatisfied with letting his capital idle. Therefore he adds: "I prefer being censured by you while your money is safe to being censured while your money is lost." [218]

The ability to supervise one's investments certainly played an important part in the choice of the type of investment preferred. Wherever we have the possibility to check we find that persons invested in farmland and husbandry when they had some connection with the country, for example, as tax-farmers or government officials, or as relatives of such persons. Thus, the son of an immigrant from Baghdad referred to above (p. 117) as a landowner was an assistant director of finance in a rural district, and the scribe from Old Cairo who also owned land was his brother-in-law. A similar relationship existed between two cousins, immigrants from Palestine (cf. *ibid.*). The family described there as possessing flocks of sheep and agricultural land acted as farmers of the taxes on fruit trees.[219] Very rich people could allow themselves the luxury of the role of absentee landlords since their possessions and

undertakings were so manifold that they had partly to be managed by agents.

The majority of the Geniza people lived in cities or provincial towns. Urban property could therefore be conveniently supervised by them and consequently represented a most popular form of investment. The extremely rich Geniza material on the subject is discussed in a separate subsection.[220] Seemingly, the principle of diversified investment was paramount in this field too, since we see that people, in addition to, or instead of, possessing one house, often had larger or smaller shares in a number of other houses. This, however, was due mainly to the splitting up of estates through the continuous process of inheritance. Complete houses simply were rare to come by. Although living in rented apartments was by no means uncommon, even poor people usually possessed a house or part of one. As we have noted, houses were mortgaged. Without such collateral one could hardly hope for a more substantial loan.

A similar function was fulfilled by jewelry and durable clothing and bedding, to which books, both sacred and secular, have to be added. Many Geniza papers show that such objects often were heirlooms transmitted from one generation to another. Together with houses and household goods they formed the dowry of a daughter or sister, put aside or collected years in advance of their prospective marriage. Houses and other durable possessions given by her family, together with the cash presented by the husband's marriage gift, safeguarded the economic independence of the married woman and provided for her old age in case of widowhood or divorce. The care of the family's women certainly was one of the main reasons for the accumulation of capital.

Practically every letter and legal document from the Geniza has some relevance to the question of how people tried to preserve and augment their possessions. Full justice can be done to it, therefore, only at a far more advanced stage of research. At that time, it will also be rewarding to compare the tendencies apparent in the Geniza material with the economic theories expounded in Islamic literature, as well as with those in the Talmud and later Jewish sources, and with those prevailing in popular Middle Eastern tradition, all three of which were influenced to a certain degree by Greek philosophical speculations. Still, even our preliminary study has revealed, in addition to some basic traits, quite a variety of attitudes and practices of economic behavior, which is indicative of the mobile and individualistic character of the Geniza society.

## G. GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF COMMERCE

How far did the Fatimid and Ayyubid governments of Egypt and Syria and other governments referred to in the Geniza documents

influence the commercial activities going on in their respective countries? To what extent are indications of supervision, guidance, protection, interference, or oppression discernible in our sources? The answer is that most of these elements were present, but, as a whole, within reasonable limits. There were ups and downs, there were differences among various countries, even cities, and between individual rulers and governments. But in general we do not find that people expect to receive directives or help from their governments, except for legal protection and defense against enemies and pirates, nor are there many complaints about excessive taxation or direct wrongs. Still, the presence of the government was very much felt.

First, both as producer and consumer, the government was the greatest customer in the country. Agricultural products were largely bought from or through government agencies. This applies in particular to flax, the main export staple of Egypt in that period. Before setting out to one of the centers of flax-growing, the merchants had to provide themselves with letters of introduction to the local *'āmil,* or director of finance. Upon arrival they advanced money to the dīwān, or government office, of the district. The final accounts for the purchase were settled with the central bureau in Cairo.[1]

Money was not "issued" by the government, but bought or rather ordered from it. A "supplier," called *mūrid,* delivered quantities of gold or silver in a variety of forms (bars, vessels, old coins, or their fragments) to the mint and received the equivalent in currency after the deduction of a charge for the government and remuneration for the workers. These mūrids appear, especially in the early Ayyubid period, as the richest people at the head of the lists of donators to communal appeals.[2]

Because of the incomplete state of many of our documents we are not always in a position to know which commodity was handled by the dīwān referred to. In a moving complaint, submitted by an Alexandrian Jew to a Muslim judge in a provincial town, he describes how he had purchased from a dīwān five qinṭārs of a certain article, because he was overwhelmed by homesickness and hoped to find a livelihood with these goods in his native city; however, after having brought them safely to the caravanserai, officials appeared and forced him to sell them back to the government; he now asks the judge to compel the dīwān to deliver the goods, while he was prepared to pay the latter an indemnity of 3 dinars.[3]

As consumer the government is even more in evidence in the Geniza papers. When the prices for silk in Fustat were desperately low, a merchant sold his stock to the government and received payment (as is expressly stated).[4] When a qinṭār of soap reached an exorbitant price in Tunisia, the writer who reports this matter adds: "Only the government can permit itself to buy at such a price."[5] Similarly, when in Alexandria a qinṭār of pepper cost 40 dinars, we read: "At such a price one can sell only to a government."[6]

In the same letter, another aspect of the (Fatimid) government's economic policy is apparent—its prerogative to take possession of commodities against the wish of the merchants carrying them. "The other item [which, is not stated; a reference is made to the addressee's letter] was taken by the governmental wardrobe, may God make permanent his [the ruler's] reign, and, thus far, no payment has been made."[7] This letter was written around 1120. In a letter to Alexandria, sent about seventy years earlier: "I learn from the correspondence of the merchants brought by the mail courier that the mastic that had been sequestered is now being sold freely. I hope, you have bought some." (Mastic, also called "Greek chewing gum," because it used to be obtained from a tree growing in particular on the Greek island of Chios, was a great article of import to Egypt.) In August, 1140, we read, again from Alexandria: "All silk that arrived was detained for the government with the exception of that of poor quality or small quantities." As in Byzantium, "silks of poorer quality were less restricted" by control.[8] The seizure of lead and wax, reported above, page 60, also occurred in Alexandria, which is known from literature as seat of a *matjar*, or government supply center, though more so for a later period.[9] The same practices existed elsewhere. In several letters from Tunisia, written around the middle of the eleventh century, we read that olive oil was "detained" or "seized" by the government.[10] Precious consignments of textiles destined for Qayrawān were opened and thoroughly examined in al-Mahdiyya, being passed on only if the official in charge decided not to purchase them for the government (early eleventh century).[11] The tenor of the letter reporting this occurrence clearly shows, however, that the writer would have welcomed selling his merchandise to the government, and the relatively rare occurrence of references to the forceful seizure of goods by the government agencies seems to indicate that these practices were not particularly oppressive.

Occasionally, we read about the wholesale "sequestration" of a merchant's consignment or of the "confiscation" of three ships in a row with all their cargoes, both reported with regard to al-Mahdiyya.[12] Since no details are provided, we are left in the dark as to the nature of such acts. In the first case, occurring in 1130, a local merchant might have had a claim against the traveler, wherefore the government seized his goods. This was common practice, adhered to also by the Jewish courts, so that often one cannot be sure whether a governmntal or communal authority is referred to, as when a letter from a notable in Ascalon, Palestine, addressed to a business friend in Tyre, Lebanon, contains the passage: "The elder so-and-so produced documents and oral evidence against you, which had the effect that your consignments destined for the West were detained here."[13] The seizure of the ships, which belonged to three different proprietors, must have occurred around 1050, which would lead one to assume that this was a political

action perpetrated by the Zīrid ruler of Tunisia who had broken with his Fatimid overlord in 1048. In the same letter, however, we see a number of other ships arriving safely in Alexandria from al-Mahdiyya, and the merchants mentioned as having lost their consignments were themselves Tunisians, though residing at that time, at least partly, in Egypt.[14]

Direct help extended by a government agency to a merchant is mentioned only rarely. In the winter of 1140–1141, a prominent India trader advises his representative in the East African port of 'Aydhāb to buy a certain Oriental product—and in case he was without cash to take a loan from the dīwān, or local government office. The writer, who at that time stayed in Fustat, seemed to assume that such loans were granted without much ado.[15] When in the letter to the Fayyūm quoted above, page 240, a person is warned not to do any business with the dīwān, a warning illustrated by examples of people who had suffered physical torture as a result of such dealings in Fustat, a similar relationship, namely money taken from the government, might have been involved.[16] A petition submitted to the vizier Ibn al-Sallār in December, 1150, asserts that a defunct merchant whose house and workshop had been sequestered by the police never had business relations with the dīwān, nor had ever served as a tax-farmer.[17] Thus, the warning expressed in the Fayyūm letter seems to have been not without foundation.

All in all, the situation in the Islamic countries of the Mediterranean seems not to have differed much from that in the Byzantine empire about which Steven Runciman has this to say: "Byzantine foreign trade . . . received very little encouragement from the imperial authorities whose interference in it was only concerned with questions of revenue and the acquisition of raw materials needed by the imperial factories." The action of the caliph al-Mustanṣir, who instructed his vizier to bring people with capital from Syria to Egypt, which was impoverished after years of famine (around 1075), or that of the vizier al-Ma'mūn, who ordered the establishment in Cairo of a dār wakāla for the merchants arriving from Iraq and Syria (1122–1123) show that the Fatimid government was not entirely without initiative in matters of commerce. Reports about such steps, however, are rare.[18]

Customs dues excepted, the Geniza papers do not say much about taxes imposed on business. We mostly learn about them indirectly, namely through references to tax-farmers who collected these payments for the government. Each store had to have a license, for which monthly dues had to be paid. This applied not only to workshops, as might be concluded from our literary sources, but also shops for the sale of foodstuffs and other commodities. These dues were collected according to the months of the Muslim year, not those of the financial year which was geared to the agricultural seasons. This fact, however, should not induce us to assume—as has been done—that these were rents for

government-owned premises. The store licenses had to be adapted to the months of the Muslim year because stores, like houses and apartments, were leased for such periods.[19] In a late Geniza document from the Mamluk period this tax is called *ḥisba,* or payment to the *muḥtasib,* the superintendent of the market, and it forms an important item in a contract of partnership in a store for the production and sale of cheese.[20] As we know from other sources, the ḥisba had become a heavy burden by that time. No such complaints with regard to the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods have been found thus far. This office of the muḥtasib, which in Egypt became prominent only by the end of the twelfth century, is discussed in *Mediterranean Society,* Volume II, chapter vii, section C.

The system of licensing, in addition to being a source of revenue, enabled the government to supervise the commercial and industrial activities of its subjects. At the conclusion of a partnership it had to be stipulated unequivocally who would be the responsible manager "whose name was registered with the tax-farmers."[21] From the conditions of such contracts we have concluded that a partner holding a license was in an advantageous position as opposed to the person joining the business or the workshop.[22]

In a famous passage of his *Khiṭaṭ,* al-Maqrīzī enumerates eighty-eight noncanonical dues and taxes levied by the Fatimids and abolished by Saladin when he assumed power in Egypt. The total revenue from these *mukūs,* collected in the twin cities of Cairo and Fustat, amounted to 100,000 dinars per year. Saladin's action was by no means exceptional. The caliph al-Ḥākim (996–1021) had made the same pious gesture before, and the ostentatious abolition of taxes not recognized by Islamic religious law became a standard practice for rulers on ascending the throne.[23]

Maqrīzī's list is instructive inasmuch as it indicates that the Fatimid tax system tried to adapt itself to a diversified and largely urban economy, although the main burden still was borne by the farmland. A number of points in this list could be illustrated from the Geniza documents. The main items were tolls collected from almost anything entering or leaving the twin cities. This subject is treated in the section on customs. It is not always possible to distinguish between these tolls and the purchase tax, since both were called, among other names, *wājib,* "dues." Concerning slaves we know positively that "market dues" were paid at their sale.[24] The same applied to transport animals. In one letter it was 2 dirhems per donkey and 4 per camel. Prices for donkeys fluctuated in the Geniza documents between 2 and 5 dinars, with 3 as an average. Thus the purchase tax would amount to about 1-⅔ percent. Maqrīzī reports that a camel selling for 5 dinars would be taxed 5 dirhems, around 2-½ percent. The writer of that letter was afraid, however, that the newly appointed head of the relevant government office would increase the tariff despite an assurance in writing

by his predecessor to the contrary.[25] According to Maqrīzī's list, the market in riding animals (donkeys or mules) brought a yearly revenue of 400 dinars. On the assumptions that the tax per head was the same as indicated in the Geniza letter and that the average ratio between dinar and dirhem was 1:40, a total of 8,000 animals would have changed hands in the twin cities during a single year. Saladin's edict, as reported by Maqrīzī, does not govern the tax on the production of wine which was abolished by him on another occasion but reinstated later, nor does it include that on the transfer of real estate. Both impositions are referred to in the Geniza documents, the latter in considerable detail.[26]

The expression "purchase tax," *wājib mushtarā*, has been found thus far only with regard to al-Mahdiyya around 1100. It was 7-1/24 local dinars on a sale of 264-7/24, about 2.7 percent. The report concerned does not comment on the rate which was probably customary at that time and place.[27] In Alexandria a sales tax of 2 percent was regarded as particularly heavy, as is indicated in this somewhat cryptic passage from a letter sent from there to al-Mahdiyya around 1050: "Much was lost from the price of the goods I sold for you in Alexandria, for every damned dinar in Alexandria goes down the drain through a rescript of the government. For every 50 dinars in number they asked from me one dinar. I said to them: 'One does not make a profit of 1 dinar on 50.' Moreover I have brought them [the dinars] with me to Alexandria. I hope that I shall retrieve most of them for you." [28]

The concluding sentence of this passage contains an allusion that was certainly not destined for the eyes of a government official. The Geniza proves that there was some kind of economic censorship. The merchants generally expected that their letters could be intercepted by the *aṣḥāb al-akhbār*, the government secret service, and therefore often referred to oral messages that were to be transmitted by business friends traveling at the same time or on the same ship in which the letter was sent. Articles that at certain periods it was hazardous or not permissible to trade, such as iron, wheat, or silver, were expressed in Hebrew. The writers assumed that the secret police knew the Hebrew script in which the letters were written, but not the language. (They might have been mistaken in this respect as were the nineteenth-century cattle-dealers of Hesse or Bavaria, who spoke a Judaizing argot among themselves which some outsiders succeeded in mastering.) There is also direct testimony for such governmental surveillance. In a letter written around 1100, the chief rabbi of Aleppo, Syria, asks a colleague, it seems, in Fustat, to send him legal documents concerning a property of orphans by special mail, and not, as was usual, attached to business correspondence, "for the letters of the merchants are being detained and hardly reach Aleppo." [29] A Tunisian merchant, writing from Sicily, reports around 1063: "The mailman, Ibn 'Abbūd, arrived, but no letter from you arrived with him. I was very much upset. Then he told me that he had carried a letter for me, but it was taken away from him in

al-Mahdiyya."[30] Approximately at the same time we read in a letter from Alexandria: "The courier was on the point of leaving when he was detained by the governor."[31]

We should not assume, however, that the government and the merchants' community formed two hostile camps. In the section on dues and customs we see that customs evasions were not common to an extent greater than could reasonably be expected. And there were manifestations of cooperation. The same merchant whose letter was confiscated in al-Mahdiyya and who used to commute between Sfax, his native Tunisian city, and Mazara, Sicily, reports, when once at home: "My lord, the qā'id, sent for me and dispatched me to Yanūnash to collect the tithes."[32] Naturally, this merchant who for many years had bought from the farmers their main product, olive oil, for export to Egypt, was well acquainted with their circumstances and was therefore an ideal tax collector. About twenty-five years earlier, when, owing to an open state of war, only the sultan's ship sailed from Tunisia to Egypt, the sultan permitted a prominent Jewish merchant to load his consignments (and those of his friends) on his ship.[33] Robes of honor were bestowed on merchants as on government officials and other deserving notables.[34]

Above all: the whole Fatimid administration was based on tax-farming; it devolved one of the main economic tasks of the government on individual merchants.[35] The Geniza documents confirm Claude Cahen's verdict on the general economic policies of the Egyptian government during the High Middle Ages: it had neither the wish, nor the machinery to impose strict control over a burgeoning economy.[36]

CHAPTER IV

# *Travel and Seafaring*

## 1. INCENTIVES FOR TRAVEL

Travel today is normally convenient and even pleasurable. Our means of transportation are comfortable, fast, and safe. As a rule, the present-day traveler need not fear pirates and robbers, or the unexpected seizure of his belongings by a hostile government. On journeys that require a protracted absence from his home, he may be accompanied by his wife or even his whole family. When this is not feasible, or on shorter journeys, he is able to remain in constant contact with his loved ones through the modern methods of communication.

The situation was much different in the times and the countries that form the subject of this study. The means of locomotion were slow and caused extreme discomfort. Nature's caprice and perfidy vied with the lawlessness and rapacity of man to render any journey a hazardous undertaking. Wives, not to speak of children, practically never accompanied the father of the family on his journeys, even when he was away for years. A further hardship on travelers and their families was the impossibility of hearing from one another over long periods of time.

Yet, Mediterranean man in the Middle Ages was an impassioned and persevering traveler. The factors inducing him to go on long distance journeys have been treated on pages 42–59, above. Here it should be added that there were also many compelling reasons for travel within the borders of a country. Administration was concentrated in the capital of the state or in the provincial seats of government. In order to apply for a license, or a position, or to obtain redress in matters of taxation, one had to betake oneself to the relevant government office and often to more than one. The administration of justice was also highly centralized, and, because of the curious procedures adhered to in the Muslim as well as in the Jewish courts of the time, a litigation, even of comparatively small scope, used to start at the top rather than at the bottom of the judicial ladder. All this necessitated trips to the capital, whenever a case could not be settled by agreement. Administrative officials and circuit judges were to be found on the roads, and so were the physicians serving the amirs or called to patients in smaller places.[1]

Commerce was another great incentive for travel. According to the principle that "a man who is present sees what he who is absent cannot see," businessmen felt themselves compelled to visit in person even remote centers of agricultural or industrial production. When this was not practicable, they would send trustworthy representatives, or induce some relative or business partner, to settle there temporarily or permanently. In this manner, members of a family or business community would become widely dispersed, and their mutual visiting resulted in much additional traffic. Etiquette required that in cases of mourning or joy, such as a wedding or a circumcision celebration, relatives and friends should participate in person, even if they lived in a distant town. Moreover, people seem generally to have been quite sociable. The Geniza has preserved many letters alluding to weekend and holiday visits with one's relatives or friends in both cities and villages.

We see, then, that inland trips in those days were no less frequent than voyages overseas, and the discomfort and the insecurity involved in both were insufficient to discourage travel necessary for administrative, business, or social purposes. It is natural that the degree of security and ease sought after by each society depends on what it is accustomed to in general.

The idea of travel for pleasure was not entirely foreign to the Geniza people. A Tunisian emigrant, sojourning in Palermo on his way to Egypt, suggests to his brother there to come to Sicily "for both pleasure and business." The products of the East had a good market on the island, and the two brothers would assist each other and be happy together.[2] Journeys from the city to the countryside and vice versa, or from one town to another, when motivated by social reasons, sometimes had also a connotation of pleasure trips, including recreation for the children who would be freed for some time from the heavy yoke of the Bible school.

Some of the Geniza letters betray a certain spirit of adventure, although this trend is more pronounced in the India trade than in the correspondence relating to the Mediterranean. Sons, sometimes evidently mere boys, urged their fathers to send them overseas to study the arcanums of commerce in one of the great business houses abroad.[3] Occasionally, an enterprising young man would leave with goods, but without the permission and even knowledge of, his father, who then would implore his friends in other places to find out where he was ("some say he followed the army, others, he traveled to Yemen").[4] A mother from Aden, writing to her son in Old Cairo, scolds him for having journeyed so far, quoting the biblical verse "The eyes of the fool are directed to the ends of the earth (Prov. 17:24, still used by the Yemenites to ridicule a person who goes far afield while he would do better to stay put. But the Yemenites are inveterate travelers).[5] "I am not a seafarer" is said twice in a letter, once by a son who was prepared to accompany his mother on a voyage despite his dislike for sea travel,

and once by another relative who excuses himself for not coming to see his father.[6] This shows that people were aware of the fact that wanderlust was an individual trait. Many letters reveal that merchants were eager to be off as soon as they had returned to their base. (One merchant of Old Cairo, writing from Tyre, asks his correspondent in the Egyptian capital to settle for him certain important deals, for he would stay only a few days when coming home.)[7] It was perhaps only consideration for the family which overcame their drive for traveling. This passage in a letter to a correspondent overseas is telling: "I am not setting out, although it is sailing time, only because I have just come home." [8]

The Arabic maxim *fi'l-ḥaraka baraka*, "there is blessing in movement," which is also included in the title of an interesting Islamic compilation on the religious value of commerce and other economic activities,[9] was the watchword of the period. Breadwinners and beggars, the pious and the scholars, all were on the move. How this was done, how people traveled and transported their goods is richly illustrated by the Geniza documents.

## 2. OVERLAND TRAVEL

People preferred to travel by water rather than overland. "If, God forbid, I shall miss the boat, I shall travel [from Alexandria] to Tripoli [Libya] overland." [1] "Cowrie shells," writes a merchant from al-Mahdiyya, "have no market here in the winter. They are traded only with people coming by sea during the summer. There is no one here who would travel by land." [2] The implication of these and similar statements is that normally, if one failed to get a passage by ship, one would rather wait for the next seafaring season than join a caravan. Wherever such an alternative existed, people traveled by sea, even for such short distances as Acre–Ramle (via Jaffa), Palestine, or Tyre–Tripoli, Lebanon, distances of less than a hundred miles. Inside Egypt, too, transport on the Nile and its various arms and canals was the normal means of locomotion, wherever feasible. Consequently, while the Geniza records abound in details about travel on water, references to travel on land are comparatively sparse.

Travelers who did not go on foot used riding beasts. Carriages, so common in the Roman period, had completely disappeared and are nowhere referred to in the Geniza papers with the possible exception of India (where they were drawn by oxen).[3] Generally, one rode a donkey or a mule, the latter being reserved for persons of higher standing. "My lord [the writer's superior] lent his mule to the elder Abu 'l-Mufaḍḍal and the latter gave me his donkey," writes a government official. From the same letter we may conclude that the saddle was of no less importance for the rider than the riding animal itself. For when setting out on his journey, by water, of course, he took saddle and headgear

with him, in order to be able to hire a donkey at the place where his overland journey was to begin.[4] Just as we check our heavy luggage, the medieval traveler, when setting out on a longer journey, entrusted his bedding, furs, and the clothes he did not need to the "saddlebag," namely of a camel or other beast of transport, while he would ride on a donkey or on a mule. We learn about this when, because of special circumstances, the heavy luggage was redistributed to the travelers, much to their discomfort and that of their mounts.[5] One preferred to carry as little baggage as possible. When, in August, 1061, the Jewish judge of al-Mahdiyya wished to entrust a manuscript containing sixteen quires to "Damascenes," which means merchants traveling in the caravan heading for Damascus and passing Old Cairo, they refused, saying: "We have nowhere to put it." The writer thereupon ensures his correspondent in the Egyptian capital that the desired book would be sent with the next convoy of ships leaving the shores of Tunisia.[6] Through smaller or partly reclaimed deserts, such as the Sinai peninsula, one could ride on a donkey or on a mule, but over greater stretches of wasteland, such as the Libyan desert, even a European visiting that country had to accept the hardships of a camel ride.[7]

Only under quite exceptional circumstances, as when no other means of transport were available, would one undertake a journey on foot. "After leaving you on Sunday," writes a scholar from Fustat to his brother-in-law, a government official in al-Bahnasā, "I went on foot, together with 'Imrān and Ibrahīm, to Minya, looking for a boat. When I did not find one, I set out, as I was, walking to al-Jīza [present-day Gizeh] and—God is my witness—I plodded along until I arrived on Tuesday afternoon almost dead. At the very hour I arrived, there arrived also the riding beasts belonging to the Amir. This was the blessing of my staying with you over the Sabbath." The mounts of the amir were perhaps a regular means of transportation, which was not functioning on schedule on that particular occasion.[8]

For reasons of safety and convenience, whenever someone set out on a more protracted journey, he traveled in caravans. This was done not only for the crossing of a desert, as was required on the journey from Cairo to Damascus or from western North Africa to Egypt, but even when the way led through such a densely populated area as that traversed by the road from Aleppo, Syria, to Tripoli, Lebanon.[9] Normally the size of the caravans is not indicated. When we read in a letter that the pilgrims' caravan, which also carried Indian spices and other Oriental products from the Red Sea to Cairo in the month of January, comprised 500 camels, this is to be taken as a warning to merchants that the markets of the capital soon would be swept with goods.[10]

Of particular importance were the caravans connecting the Muslim West: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya, with Egypt and other countries of the Muslim East. These caravans had a special name,

*mawsim,* literally: fixed date, season, because they used to set out at more or less fixed times. The same word designated in the countries of the Indian Ocean the seasonal winds and has entered the English language in the form *monsoon* with this meaning. "The mawsims of the land and the ships of the sea have arrived, but no letter from you." References like this are regularly found in letters from Qayrawān.[11] The word mawsim designated both the caravan and the fair or business season connected with its arrival. In a letter sent around 1040 to a Tunisian merchant sojourning in Egypt, the Qayrawānese writer states that he sold four bales of Egyptian flax every day during twenty days of the mawsim, announcing also that he was sending on the same day 309-¾ dinars to his correspondent.[12]

In winter, when the sea was closed to ships, the caravan traffic was of particular importance. In a normal winter, at least three caravans used to set out for the East from Qayrawān, which name, incidentally, is derived from the same Persian word as English *caravan.*[13] When sending off letters and shipments in the last boats leaving in the autumn, a merchant would write: the next letters and shipments will follow in the mawsim, that is, overland.[14] Vice versa, letters bearing dates as from October 15th approximately refer to preceding messages as having been forwarded "in the ships," implying that they themselves were to be carried in a caravan.[15]

In summer, too, the caravans were vital for the maintenance of a continuous traffic. The ships used to sail in convoys mainly in springtime and again in fall. In the interval, caravans filled the gap. A caravan from Alexandria was expected in Qayrawān by the end of August.[16] The caravan with the Damascene merchants referred to above, page 276, left al-Mahdiyya late in the summer, a short time before the sailing of the autumn convoys, and the letter speaking of them also went overland. An important message on communal affairs was sent from Qayrawān to Ibn 'Awkal in Fustat "with the summer caravan," preceded by another letter carried by a merchant who had set out in a smaller company one-and-a-half months earlier. This man, who happened to be Mūsā Ibn al-Majjānī, the "disciple" of Ibn 'Awkal, certainly was expected to make stops in various cities on the way and to continue his journey whenever his affairs were settled and a new company of travelers was formed. Therefore the writer assumed the possibility that the message carried might arrive before the letter entrusted to Ibn al-Majjānī, who made his way with a *rifqa,* or small group of fellow travelers.[17]

These smaller companies of travelers (also called ṣuḥba, which simply means company) did not have a regular timetable as the mawsims had, but set out whenever a sufficient number of wayfarers had assembled. "I shall join the first company setting out for Marrākesh," writes a visitor from Spain, staying in Fez, Morocco.[18] When a refugee from Alexandria tried to return to his home from Lukk, Libya,

he was unable to find companions and was forced to make the long detour via the oases of western Egypt, Upper Egypt, and Old Cairo, which took him six months.[19] Even on a short trip it was absolutely unheard of to travel unaccompanied. In a circular, written in spring, 1176, Samuel b. Eli, the head of the Jewish Academy of Baghdad, required of his coreligionists in Egypt, among other things, that they provide escorts for his emissaries from one locality to another.[20] Accompanying foreigners on their travels was a work of piety, ascribed in Jewish legend to the biblical patriarch Abraham, the paragon of hospitality.

The overlapping of long and short distance routes has been discussed with regard to both seafaring and overland travel in connection with the techniques of international commerce.[21] That study is complemented here by an additional observation. The short routes served also as substitutes for direct long-distance lines when the latter were missed or were otherwise unavailable. Nahray b. Nissīm, writing in Old Cairo in the month of Shebat (January/February), that is, at a time when only overland traffic connected Tunisia with Egypt, sends this information to his correspondent in Būṣīr, about 125 miles south of Cairo: "Letters have arrived for you from your uncle [and head of business house in Qayrawān], carried by a man from Tripoli, who traveled in the Barqa caravan. I forwarded them to you yesterday with so-and-so." Thus, these letters had traveled from the capital of Tunisia to Tripoli, from there to Barqa, and finally to Fustat. Nahray had to give these details because his correspondent certainly knew when the through caravans from Qayrawān arrived in Egypt and had therefore to receive an explanation why the letters of his uncle had arrived at an unexpected time.[22]

Travel overland was expensive. For the comparatively short distance from Tripoli, Libya, to Gabes, Tunisia, a visitor from Italy was charged the exorbitant sum of 3 Murābiṭī dinars (which his local friends advised him not to pay).[23] From Bilbays, the last Egyptian town on the route to Syria, a camel ride to Damascus cost 2 dinars (including expenses for food).[24] On the return route, a traveler paid in al-Muṭaylib, a caravan station in the Sinai Desert, 4 nuqra dirhems, for reaching Bilbays, a distance of about 100 miles.[25] Transport costs for a camel load of paper, carried in a caravan from Damascus to Cairo, were from 5-½ to 6 gold pieces (second half of eleventh century). Moreover, for each load, ⅛ dinar had to be paid to the military escort. As usual, the roads were unsafe. For the transport overland of 5 loads of peaches (presumably dried) from Acre, Palestine, to Fustat, the same merchant had to pay about 5 dinars per 100 pounds.[26]

The comparatively high cost of overland travel owed in part to its long duration. "Time is money" probably was not a popular slogan in the Mediterranean region (I never read it in a Geniza paper, nor

heard it from the mouth of a native), but, as an economic law, it was effective nonetheless. As we have seen, the great caravans, by their very definition, observed a certain schedule. From a letter to Ibn 'Awkal we learn that a caravan originating in Qayrawān stopped in Gabes, a prosperous center of commerce, for only a very short time, one day, it seems, which happened to be a Friday.[27] The Sijilmāsa caravans, the main transport from the Muslim Far West, passed Qayrawān according to Geniza letters both in January and in August, accepting consignments on both occasions, but, according to one report, tarrying only for a few days in that center of all North African trade.[28] Progress in general was slow. The report just referred to makes mention of another caravan organized in Qayrawān itself, "the like of which has not been seen before," but which, although setting out in January or early in February, was not expected to arrive in Cairo before the summer.[29] The death of Joseph Ibn Migash, for many years the spiritual leader of Spanish Jewry, whose eminence was recognized also by the Jews of Egypt and Yemen, became known in Alexandria only "after the lapse of seven months," as the writer emphasizes in a letter written in Alexandria in November, 1141.[30] Despite the close connections of the Jews of Wargla, a town on the Algerian Sahara, with their relatives in Jerusalem, two brothers in that town wrote a letter to their brother in the Holy City a full year after he had died (middle of eleventh century).[31] Details about the speed of overland communications are found in the Geniza mostly in connection with the commercial mail service (see pp. 281 ff., below).

Slow and costly, as it was, overland travel was certainly not made more attractive by the dangers connected with it. Caravans were protected by escorts or through payments of "blackmail" to the Bedouins or potentates through whose territories they passed, often both. Above, page 278, we saw how much this protection could cost even on a road connecting the two main cities of the Fatimid empire. But woe to the traveler who happened to come to a place without such prearranged agreements. A case in point is a report about events in Tobruk, Libya, retold in a letter from Alexandria around 1140. Three parties were involved: a Sijilmāsa caravan coming from the West, which continued its way to Alexandria and brought the news from Tobruk; another Sijilmāsa caravan going West, in which the writer's friend traveled, about whom we shall hear presently; and, finally, "the Sultan's ship," which had cast anchor there and from which a number of merchants had disembarked. These were robbed by the local "Arabs," that is, Bedouins, of everything, including their clothing, but no one, as the writer hastens to add, "died," implying, it seems, that such an attack was normally accompanied by other unpleasant features. When the writer's friend, instead of continuing his journey with the caravan, boarded the ship, the Bedouins expressed regret that they had not administered

the same treatment to him as to the other passengers of the vessel. Clearly he had lost his status as a protected member of a caravan by boarding the ship.[32]

In populated areas, too, travel was insecure. The following report from Malīj, a little town in the very heart of the Nile Delta, illustrates. A man had set out from this place for Old Cairo with some goods, in exchange for which he hoped to acquire merchandise needed to restock his store. Between two villages, named in the document, he was attacked by bandits, who took away his saddlebag with its contents, as well as his clothes. Before being attacked, however, he had succeeded in hiding a part of the goods carried with him. He went back to the first village, where, it seems, he had friends, and after passing the night there, he proceeded to the second village, where he informed the local *nā'ib,* or "substitute" judge, of the brigandage perpetrated in the area under his jurisdiction. In order to corroborate his statement, he showed him the goods he had hidden from the bandits. Upon hearing his case, the nā'ib sent two men with him to help him retrieve the lost valuables. They were hardly out of the village, however, when the man was robbed and murdered by the two men accompanying him as escort, who also killed the dead man's donkey, lest the stray animal arouse suspicion. All these details, the victim's sons claimed, had been learned from the villagers, as well as from a statement by the nā'ib, who had testified to a representative of the governor of the Sharqiyya province that the boys' father had appeared before him. The report was addressed to Samuel, the Nagid, with the request that it be acted upon at high quarters.[33] As we shall see later on, travel on the Nile and its canals was risky, too.

The relative paucity of Geniza material about overland travel may owe partly to specific circumstances. Besides the India trade, the bulk of the interterritorial correspondence preserved is concerned with the commerce between Egypt and Tunisia. But the latter country, as we remember, was flooded by the Bedouin hordes of the Hilāl and Sulaym in the late 1050's, an event that greatly impaired overland traffic in North Africa. It must be remarked, however, that during the first half of the eleventh century, long before the disastrous invasion of the Arab tribes, international trade, as far as reflected in the Geniza, used maritime transportation to an incomparably higher degree than overland transportation. Here it is perhaps appropriate to draw attention to a certain disability of the writers of the Geniza letters, who, as Jews, were prevented by the injunctions of their religion to travel on Saturdays and holidays. A Jew traveling in a caravan, when his day of rest approached, either stayed behind or hurried ahead of the caravan so that he could observe his Sabbath, and both alternatives are mentioned in our records. This procedure required an escort of Bedouin guides, which was both expensive and not without danger.[34] The refugee from Alexandria, referred to above, page 277, writes in 1131 that most of the

money he carried with him on his desert trip was spent for the Sabbaths and the holidays and "the protection" they required.[35] A traveler from Āmul, Tabaristan, to Baghdad states, a hundred years earlier, that half his money "went for the Sabbaths" on a journey that caused him the greatest discomfort. Since he had 150 dinars left over, his expenses for his weekly stopovers must have been very considerable indeed.[36] If the traveler was rich and influential, he could induce the whole caravan to make a stop for his sake, as did a purveyor to the Fatimid court in spring, 1100, when he took to Egypt a group of refugees from Palestine, who had escaped the Crusaders' massacres. The report says that both Passover and the Sabbaths were kept by the group on their way owing to the munificence of that man.[37] It may be noted that these conditions remained unchanged down to the nineteenth century. The renowned Orientalist, Professor A. S. Yahuda, recounts in his collected essays that when his grandfather emigrated in 1852 from Baghdad to Jerusalem and was traveling from the former town to Aleppo in northern Syria by caravan, he stipulated that it make a stop each Saturday, for which arrangement he paid a huge amount of money.[38]

Merchants accompanying consignments could not incur such expenses, nor take the risks that a Sabbath rest behind or in advance of a caravan involved. We find, therefore, that shipments, when going over a desert route at all, were confided to Muslim business friends. In a letter dispatched from Qayrawān early in the eleventh century, the addressees in Old Cairo are requested to send textiles by caravan "with trustworthy Muslims."[39] Somewhat later, a correspondent is advised to forward goods with the Mecca pilgrim Ali, the Sicilian, another Mecca pilgrim called by name, or a person from a certain Bedouin family.[40] Non-Muslims did not travel in a pilgrim's caravan even on its way back from Egypt to the West.[41] It was not always possible to find a traveler prepared to transport other people's shipments. Even in the exceptionally large caravan organized in Qayrawān, referred to page 279, above, a writer complains, he was unable to ship a package containing a hundred or so pieces of clothing.[42] This state of affairs explains the frequency of partnerships between Tunisian Jews and Muslims encountered in the second part of the eleventh century.

Thus, the Geniza papers cannot be regarded as a representative source of information on the caravan traffic in medieval Islam. For this deficiency we are richly compensated by the abundance of material about the commercial mail service, a subject practically unknown to us from other sources.

## 3. THE COMMERCIAL OVERLAND MAIL SERVICE

Day in, day out, we make use of the services of the mail. It is part of our lives. But we are hardly aware of the fact that this vital human

institution is of comparatively recent creation and its beginnings have been thus far rather obscure. To be sure, the courier post of the rulers goes back to the ancient East; it served them as a means for watching over the loyalty of their officials and other subjects and thus for keeping their realms together. In Europe, too, the princely mail is old. The needs of the population at large for regular and inexpensive communication, however, have not attracted the attention of the chroniclers. Even the voluminous writings of the Muslim historians (as from the ninth century A.D.) have not yet yielded data about a mail service available to the ordinary citizen. The merchant communities in the chief trading centers of western Europe created some such service about which a trickle of information begins to appear by the end of the twelfth century.[1] But it took a long time before this courier service, owing to the initiative of the Venetians, was thrown open to the use of the public. In view of this, it is gratifying to find that the Geniza documents provide us with detailed information about a ramified overland mail service, commercially operated as early as the beginning of the eleventh century. The service itself might have been considerably older than the data preserved through the Geniza.[2]

The subject of this section, then, is not the *barīd,* the governmental courier and intelligence service, which has often been treated, but the commercial post used by the population at large. To a certain extent, the mail service run by private enterprise was modeled after the fashion of the governmental barīd. Therefore a few words are provided about the latter before enlarging on the commercial post.

The barīd was taken over by the Arabs from the Persians, as is proved by the terms used and by other evidence. It was linked up, albeit loosely, with similar services in the Chinese and Byzantine empires. A. Mez makes the interesting observation that this institution must have been invented in one particular state from where it was subsequently transferred to others, for in all the three services, the Islamic, the Chinese, and the Byzantine, it was customary to dock the tails of the mounts used in them.[3] Such a specific trait could hardly have been invented independently in three different places. Muslim writers derived the very word barīd from this custom of shortening the tails of the government mounts, *burīden* meaning cutting in Persian. Barīd, however, no doubt comes from the Latin *veredarius,* a word that is common in Talmudic literature under the form *beldār, buldār,* and is found also in Syriac. The Arabic form of the word is nearer to the Latin and Greek forms than the Hebrew and Aramaic ones. Thus, it stands to reason that the widely traveled Arabs became familiar with this Roman institution directly and long before Islam. This would explain why the word barīd was used also in the Islamic East. On the other hand, the Romans themselves might have learned from the Persians. As is well known, Herodotus describes the governmental post as a

Persian invention. It might have been based, however, on Babylonian antecedents.

Of late, the subject has been treated by Dominique Sourdel in the new edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam.*[4] A few relevant items may be added to the data provided there. Six papyri preserved in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, and edited by D. S. Margoliouth, deal with the subject. In these, the *ṣāḥib barīd Ushmūn,* the postmaster of Ushmūn in Upper Egypt, is advised by his superior to let certain government messengers, including one from the governor himself, ride on the mounts of the barīd. Thus we see that even a government official could not make use of this service without the written permission of the governor of the province. These papyri, which come from the years A.H. 134–136 (A.D. 751–753), are the more interesting, as they repeatedly make mention of the *dābbat furāniq,* the courier's mount. Furāniq is a Persian word, common in the Babylonian Talmud under the form *parwanqā* and found in pre-Islamic poetry in a poem by Imru' ul-Qays. More is said about this Talmudic word later.[5]

Attention should also be given to an even earlier document, mentioning the barīd, a dispatch written on leather and sent in 717–718 by a Soghdian prince to his Arab superior far away in Central Asia.[6]

In Umayyad times the barīd was most important as a means of military communication. When al-Ḥajjāj, the viceroy of Iraq, sent a mighty force, the *jaysh aṭ-ṭawāwīs,* "the peacock army," against the Turkish ruler of Kābul in present-day Afghanistan, the army never proceeded without first establishing relay stations equipped with barīd mounts in its rear.[7]

Albert Dietrich, in his publication of Arabic letters from the Hamburg papyri collection, provides some additional details on the barīd.[8] An Arabic Ph.D. dissertation dealing with the subject contains a useful survey of the widely dispersed information.[9]

In general, the Geniza records had no opportunity to refer to the governmental post, as far as it existed in their time. One passage from a letter written around 1210 has some bearing on the subject. Its writer was a Jewish scholar from Jerusalem who was connected with the then governor of that city, al-Muwaffaq Nūr al-Dawla, possibly because his son, known from other letters as a physician, served the governor in this capacity. Because of the Sabbath, on which a Jew, as we know, was not supposed to travel, the scholar had been detained in al-Muṭaylib, a caravan station in the Sinai Desert. After having described the hardships endured on his journey the writer continues: "When the bearer of this letter, namely the messenger, *rasūl,* of the Sultan—may God grant him victory—passed through, he most kindly said: write a letter and I shall transmit it for you. Thus I instructed him to deliver it to one of the servants of the illustrious great lord Al-Muwaffaq Nūr al-Dawla for transmittance to my son." On the reverse side, in addition

to the address, the following remark is written in Arabic letters: *"balligh tu'jar"* ("Deliver and you will receive reward [namely from God]"). This phrase, which is written on scores of Geniza letters means: "The forwarding of this letter is a personal favor. No payment is to be made for it." This shows that the rasūl, like the ancient couriers of the barīd, was a man of higher standing and knew the scholar well from previous visits to Jerusalem. Moreover, the whole tenor of the passage seems to indicate that the appearance of the rasūl in al-Muṭaylib was not an extraordinary coincidence, but a regular occurrence. The only fact emphasized as noteworthy in the letter was the courtesy of the courier who did a personal favor to the writer.[10]

As noted, commercial mail service was to a certain extent organized on the lines of the barīd. Its very nomenclature points in this direction: The couriers were called *fayj,* plural *fuyūj,* an Arabization of Persian *payk,* which is derived from *pā,* foot. Literally, the word means runner, but it was a most common term for the riders of the barīd.[11] From the noun fayj, a verb *fayyaj,* "to use the services of a courier," was derived in the Geniza, but has not yet been found in another source.[12] The Hebrew equivalent of fayj in the Geniza records is *rāṣ,* runner, which is the biblical word from the book of Esther designating the Persian payk.[13] Fayj was used in Spain and all over North Africa, including Egypt. On the route between Cairo, Jerusalem, Tyre, and Damascus, the word *kutubī,* bearer of *kutub,* letters, was the common term.[14] In one and the same letter, couriers operating between Egypt and Jerusalem are referred to as kutubiyyīn and those going to the Muslim West as fuyūj.[15] In Arabia, that is, on the way between Aden via the Ḥijāz to Cairo, the more classical *aṣḥāb al-kutub,* "couriers of letters," seems to have been preferred. In the two cases traced thus far, the mail was sent on the unsafe desert route in two copies, that is, by two different couriers.[16] In a list of Jewish taxpayers from Fustat the word rasūl, messenger, appears as the name of an occupation.[17] A letter from Alexandria from the beginning of the thirteenth century has this postscript: "I missed the rasūl. Therefore my letter is late." [18] All this seems to indicate that rasūl was applied also to the regular mail service, a usage reflecting perhaps also on the meaning of the governmental rasūl appearing in Fatimid and Ayyubid times (cf. above, p. 283).

The commercial fuyūj, like the barīd, were found solely on land (but also on boats sailing along the Syro-Palestinian coast and probably also on the Nile River and its canals). Although the volume of maritime traffic outstripped transportation by land many times, we never find a fayj on a ship going overseas. During summer, roughly between April and September, letters were sent *fī 'l-marākib,* "in the ships" (in the plural, because for reasons of safety normally several copies were dispatched). These letters were confided to business friends, and in case there were none on a ship, which rarely happened, the captain or a sailor did the job. In winter, roughly between October and

March, one used the services of the fuyūj. In summer, too, the fuyūj were not out of business, as far as international traffic was concerned. As has been pointed out above (p. 277), the ships used to sail in convoys, in spring normally from the end of April to the beginning of June and in the fall from the middle of August to the end of September. In between, caravans and fuyūj filled the gap left by overseas transportation. This restriction of the commercial mail service to overland travel is an additional indication that it originated in Persia, a continental country, and not in Byzantium, an essentially maritime power.

There was another most characteristic aspect in which the commercial fuyūj followed the example of the governmental barīd. This institution maintained relay stations where the riding animals—mules, horses, or camels—were frequently changed, but one and the same messenger carried the dispatches entrusted to him from the starting point to the final destination. The same was done by the private couriers. One man would carry the mail from Qayrawān all the way along to Cairo, or even from Almeria, Spain, through the whole of North Africa straight to Alexandria.[19] It is also not excluded that there was direct service between Baghdad and Qayrawān, for a man writing from the latter city to Ibn ʿAwkal in Old Cairo says: "In these days there arrived many letters with the fuyūj which were dated six months back in Baghdad." But these might not have come to Qayrawān directly, but might have been forwarded to the writer through business friends in Old Cairo other than Ibn ʿAwkal.[20]

Many Geniza letters contain expressions of apprehension that they might fall into the hands of unauthorized persons. In order to avoid such occurrences, one confided one's correspondence either to a close business friend or to a trusted fayj. Therefore, it is not surprising that the names of such mail carriers are mentioned repeatedly, which shows that they were personally known both to the senders and to the addressees. Thus far, I have noted four such cases for the route Tunisia–Egypt, seven for that of Alexandria–Cairo, and one for Cairo–Ramle. But there are more.

It was perhaps due to the confidential nature of the courier's occupation that Jews, too, were engaged in it, although this must have involved the persons concerned in many difficulties because of the prohibition of travel on Sabbath. Jews appear in this capacity on the routes Alexandria–Cairo, Egypt–Palestine, and perhaps also Egypt–Tunisia. Most of the fuyūj must have been Muslims, as is proved by their names and also by the fact that Nahray once acknowledges receipt of a letter from Alexandria carried by "a Jewish fayj," which he would not have said had many Jews been active in this field.[21] At a certain period, Jews were perferred on the Cairo–Alexandria route. In a letter from Alexandria, which was carried by a fayj called Jacob (not Yaʿqūb, the Arabic form of the name), the writer says that he had sent other letters "with a Muslim," and whatever other letters he would

forward with Muslims would be delivered to "the House of 'Abd," a Muslim postal agency known from other letters.[22] Three other fuyūj commuting between Alexandria and Cairo had names extremely common among Jews (but borne also by Muslims).[23] A Jewish special messenger going from Alexandria to the capital of Egypt is also mentioned.[24] Of particular interest is a note in the Hebrew language by "Mūsā (Moses) b. Joseph, the Red, the runner," in which he conveys his greetings to the Gaon Joshiah, the head of the academy in Jerusalem (around 1015), adding that he was going back to Egypt. Normally, we must assume, he carried the letters all the way from Cairo to Jerusalem. This time, he had to turn back to Egypt immediately after his arrival in Ramle, the administrative capital and traffic center of Palestine, wherefore he forwarded the letters destined for Jerusalem with a Muslim colleague. We see here that a courier was a person important enough to address the Gaon and to assure him of his loyalty.[25]

The Jewish courier was also needed for another purpose. When the mail arrived, the womenfolk, most of whom did not know how to read, needed someone to read it out to them. When no one else was around, the courier did the job, and letters written by Jews, we remember, normally were written in Hebrew characters. This situation is well illustrated by a passage from a letter of an elderly lady in Qayrawān writing to her brothers out on a business trip in Egypt: "Your letters to your families reporting your well-being have arrived. I went to the fayj and he read them out to me in full. I was very sad to note that I did not see from any one of you greetings to me, let alone a letter."[26] The seasoned courier probably allowed himself this little break of confidence because he knew that the brothers would not mind, since the letters from the foreign country would be read out again and again anyway in the family assemblies back home in Qayrawān. Whether this particular fayj had come all the way from Alexandria or had picked up the Egyptian mail in al-Mahdiyya cannot be decided. In this connection, attention should be drawn to an Aramaic proverb, which occurs several times in the Babylonian Talmud: "The man who is able to read a letter should become its bearer" (*"qaryānā de'iggartā īhū lehwē parwanqā"*). This shows that in Sasanid Persia too, a man was chosen as parwanqā, furāniq, or courier, because of his knowledge of reading.

There was a marked difference between the postal service on the route connecting the capital of the Fatimid empire with its Asian dependencies and those operating on all other routes represented in the Geniza. This important aspect is discussed at the end of this section. In general, we do not find that the fuyūj were organized in a guild or any other form of permanent cooperative association. Still, there must have been some kind of regular arrangements among them, for our records often speak about them in the plural and indicate that they set out or arrived at more or less fixed times. A man from the East writes to Tunisia: "Dispatch the goods in the first ship sailing [in spring], but

in the meantime acknowledge with the couriers the arrival of my shipments."[27] A widow in Tunisia, writing to her brother in Egypt complains: "The couriers have arrived, but with no letter from you."[28] In a long epistle going from Old Cairo to Jerusalem we read: "The letters of so-and-so will be forwarded to you with the couriers."[29] In two letters, one written in Fustat and one in al-Mahdiyya, great concern was expressed when the fuyūj had not arrived by the month of January.[30]

The regularity of this postal service is also attested by those passages in the Geniza records where the addressee is implored to use it (and not to wait until some business friend would make the journey). In a letter dispatched from Qayrawān to Old Cairo in 1022, Rabbēnū Nissīm b. Jacob asks Ibn 'Awkal in Fustat five times that his letters be forwarded to Baghdad by courier and that the answers from there be brought to him via Egypt through the same service.[31] In a detailed business letter from al-Mahdiyya, the writer's partner in Fustat is requested to send a letter "with every fayj."[32] A man from Tripoli, Libya, writing to the East, asks the addressee to answer by all means "even with the couriers." He meant to say that it was preferable to spend money on the forwarding of letters than to delay their dispatch.[33] The postal service between Alexandria and Cairo was so regular that a merchant, writing from the capital, would express his disappointment when, on a Thursday, no mail had arrived from his business correspondent in Alexandria. He himself, writing on Sunday, remarks: "I have already sent you another letter before the Sabbath," presumably on Friday with the courier going back to the Mediterranean port.[34] In another letter from Cairo to Alexandria we read: "Send your answer with the courier who sets out at the appointed time, do not miss him."[35] These two items come from the second half of the eleventh century. At least a hundred and fifty years later we see Judge Elijah of Fustat asking a relative of his in Alexandria to send him a letter every week (or: every Friday), which can only mean by mail.[36] A similar request is made by an Egyptian merchant on a business trip to Tyre, Lebanon, from his partner back home in Fustat. He also promises to write every week—and he seems to have kept his promise, for in the course of the years seven of his letters to his partner have come to light, most of which must have been written on the same business trip to Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria.[37] A third instance of a weekly postal service concerns Qūṣ, the main city of Upper Egypt. Around 1030, a communal leader in Old Cairo writes to a friend sojourning in Qūṣ: "I regularly send you every Monday two letters." Perhaps the couriers to a city that at that time still was largely Christian were Christians themselves and used to set out on the day after their weekly day of rest.[38]

A final indication of the regularity and wide scope of the commercial mail service is its relatively inexpensive cost. For a letter coming originally from al-Mahdiyya and forwarded from Alexandria to Old

Cairo exactly 1 dirhem was paid.[39] For another letter from Tunisia forwarded from Alexandria together with a package of letters wrapped in a kerchief and destined for another person only half a silver piece was stipulated. In the latter case, the carrier was perhaps Jewish, since the address is in Hebrew characters only. This would explain the difference in the price; the clientele of the Jewish fuyūj was limited.[40] The same price of half a dirhem was charged for a letter sent from Jerusalem to Ramle, a far shorter trip, but perhaps more dangerous at that time.[41] The letter from Almeria, Spain, to Alexandria (see p. 285) cost 1-½ dirhems, four letters having been dispatched to the same address. In all these cases, payment was to be made after delivery.

It is instructive to compare these fees for the *regular* mail service with the remuneration paid to a *special* messenger. Such a messenger going from Alexandria to Old Cairo received a dinar in advance, which would mean perhaps that he received additional payment after delivery of his message,[42] for another messenger got 1-½ dinars for the same route[43] and a third one, 1-¼ dinars plus expenses.[44] This is about fifty times as much as the regular mail. A messenger sent from Cairo to Qūṣ in Upper Egypt was promised besides his expenses 1-¾ dinars, of which a quarter was paid to him in advance, while the addressee was asked "to honor" him, which probably meant giving him additional remuneration. These special messengers are referred to as rasūl in Arabic and *shālīʿaḥ* in Hebrew.[45]

On several letters sent from the cities of Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon we find this note written in the hand of the dispatching postal agent (not in that of the writer of the letter): "To be delivered immediately upon arrival." Or letters occasionally contain instructions for the addressee to fetch his mail from such-and-such an agency. From these and previous references the following picture of the delivery of the mail emerges: The couriers used to arrive at comparatively regular intervals. The more prominent merchants received their mail in their offices, including that destined for their business friends. Others had to inquire at the postal agents whether anything had arrived for them. This applied in particular to travelers. "I asked all the couriers," writes a man from Tunisia en route in Palestine, "but did not find with them anything from you."[46] Urgent messages or those which the addressee could not expect, were earmarked for special delivery.

The names of many postal agents are known to us on the route between Old Cairo and the cities of Asia. In one case in which we have information about such an agent, namely "the House of ʿAbd," who has been mentioned before in another connection, we know that he was a perfumer and representative of merchants who had his store near the Bath of the Mice, a largely Jewish neighborhood. Representatives of the merchants were indeed the natural depositaries for letters.[47]

It must have been customary that couriers on their way back advised the senders of the duly effected delivery of their messages. For in many

letters we find the assertion that the writer had no doubt that a previous letter to the addressee on the matter had reached him. Thus, a short note from Jerusalem dealing with one single topic was followed by another by the same writer devoted to the same subject and sent through the same postal agency in Fustat as the first. The second letter expressed the certain belief that the first had arrived, a fact confirmed by the Geniza finds. The writer's assertion presumably was based on information and not on mere surmise. Similar examples could be provided from other cities.[48]

Nowhere do we find that purses with money or consignments of goods were entrusted to couriers. The absence of relevant data cannot be mere chance since many letter writers complain of having no one with whom to send specified sums or goods. "Fire burns in my heart," writes a traveler from Spain to his father from Fez, Morocco, "that I have collected here gold and find no one with whom I could send it to you." [49] This exclusive role of the couriers as bearers of letters safeguarded their security. Since it was known to everyone that they did not carry valuables, they were left alone by bandits and soldiers.

How did the commercial mail couriers travel? As far as our sources go, we must conclude that this service possessed no relay stations of its own, but had to utilize the regular caravan traffic and other means of transportation. Therefore, we frequently read: "Other letters will follow with the caravan," or "I sent you letters with the caravan," expressions that are used in the same sense as references to mailing with couriers.[50] Staying with a caravan in the towns visited also gave the courier opportunity to collect additional mail. This aspect is well illustrated in a letter sent from al-Madhiyya around 1060. The writer had sent a letter to his brother in Fustat with a courier going East. Shortly afterward he received a message from his brother that a son was born to the latter. At least a week later, the brother in al-Madhiyya wrote a letter of congratulations, expressing in it the hope that the letter would still reach the courier in Sfax, a town in southeast Tunisia, situated on the caravan route to Egypt.[51]

With this we have arrived at our last question: the speed of this commercial mail service. Naturally, we cannot expect uniformity. Two letters from Alexandria addressed to Ibn ʿAwkal bear a note as to the date of their arrival in Fustat, for it was usual in that big business house to date the mail received. One arrived on the first of the Muslim month Rabīʿ II, A.H. 421, which fell, according to astronomical calculation, on Wednesday, April 8, 1030. It was written on the 28th of the Jewish month, which corresponded to the preceding Friday. The letter no doubt was delivered to a Muslim courier before the beginning of the Sabbath, on Friday afternoon, and thus arrived after a lapse of five days.[52] Perhaps it was only four days. For the Muslim calendar used to be fixed according to the actual observation of the new moon, and since in that year the corresponding Jewish new-moon day (which was

astronomically established), fell on Monday, April 6th, possibly the first of Rabīʿ II that year actually corresponded to Tuesday.[53] The second letter referred to was written on Thursday, October 1, 1030, which, according to the writer (but not the astronomical calculation) was the Jewish day of the new moon, and arrived on the sixth of the corresponding Muslim month, that is, again five days later. In the letter itself the writer mentions that his own uneventful trip from Fustat to Alexandria had consumed six days and that he had arrived two days before, namely, on Tuesday.[54] A special messenger made the round trip Alexandria–Cairo–Alexandria in seven days. Since he was not delayed by distributing and collecting mail or other business, each way had not required more than three or three-and-a-half days.[55] As to the Asian route, a letter from Old Cairo was received in Ascalon, Palestine, twelve days after the date on which it was written. Considering that the way is about two-and-a-half times as long as that between Alexandria and Fustat, this is not bad.[56]

The data ascertained thus far for the duration of the couriers' trips from Tunisia to Egypt show great discrepancies, reflecting the different types of caravans in which they traveled. A letter written in Qayrawān on August 21, 1008, arrived in Ibn ʿAwkal's office in Old Cairo on November 1st of the same year. It is not entirely excluded, however, that it was dispatched in a ship and forwarded with delay from Alexandria.[57] On the fifth day of the Jewish month of Heshvan, which corresponds approximately to October 15th, the writer mentions that a fayj called Khiyar arrived in al-Mahdiyya from Alexandria announcing that a fall convoy of six Tunisian ships had arrived safely in that port. This runner could hardly have been on his way for more than one month, since the ships used to sail from Tunisia in August.[58] A letter from Qayrawān, written on August 9, 1052, which was Elul 10, states: "Just now there arrived with a courier your letter [from Alexandria] dated a few days before the end of Sivan." Thus, this courier needed about two-and-a-half months for the trip from Egypt to Tunisia.[59] A letter received by Ibn ʿAwkal on May 13, 1011, was dispatched from Tunisia two months and seventeen days before.[60] Another letter from al-Mahdiyya, written at the end of August reports arrival of a courier from Alexandria who had been on his way for three months and five days.[61]

The connection with Qūṣ in Upper Egypt was amazingly slow. In one case it took a full fifty days for a letter from Old Cairo to reach that city. This shows again that the fuyūj normally used the regular means of transportation, for in another document we read that a family needed forty-five days for the same journey.[62]

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that we find also a *fayj ṭayyār*, an express courier, something in between a regular fayj, who moved too slowly, and a special messenger, who was too expensive. In one and the same letter we read about a regular fayj, who was prob-

ably Jewish (his name was Surūr, Hebrew Simḥā, "Happiness" a common Jewish name in those days) and an express courier called Muḥammad.[63] When an Alexandrian bids his business correspondent in Old Cairo, *tuṭayyir li kitābak,* "fly your letter to me," he most probably referred not to carrier pigeons, but to this express service. Carrier pigeons might be intended in another letter, which says: "Send me the *barā'* (release or receipt) with the bearer of this letter or with the birds," *walaw kān illā ma'a 'l-ṭayr,* possibly a technical term, parallel to the usual requests to send a letter either "by boat," or "with the fuyūj."[64] A Muslim report about friends in the cities of Qayrawān and Tunis who communicated with each other by carrier pigeons at the time of the amir Bādis (d. 1016), seems to indicate that they put this service also at the disposal of others.[65]

As alluded to above, the mail service between the capital of the Fatimid empire and its Asian dependencies, Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon, differed from that on the routes connecting it with the cities and towns of Egypt or those of North Africa and Spain. Only Tinnīs, which was situated on the route to Palestine, shared the characteristics of the Asian mail. On the reverse sides of letters from Damascus, Aleppo, Tyre, Acre, Ramle, and, above all, Jerusalem, there are often found hastily written notes, mostly consisting of two groups of names, but sometimes containing also short remarks about the place or the urgency of delivery. Since these notes are invariably in a handwriting different from that of the address and at first glance, appear as meaningless scribbles, I disregarded them as having no bearing on the content of the letters on whose backs they were found. To the best of my knowledge, none of the editors of Geniza letters has ever so much as mentioned their existence. Closer study of these notes proved, however, that they might provide us with welcome additional information on the techniques of the *kutubiyyīn,* as the mailmen on the Asian route were called.

Once alerted to the possible significance of these scrawls, I first tried to make sure that they really represented notes of postal agencies and not, for instance, additional addresses written by Muslim merchants to whom Jewish business friends might have entrusted their letters. A scrutiny of a great number of items showed that the same forwarding agencies were used by different letter writers, while the same person would use two or more agencies. Since the same system could be observed in all Asian cities connected with Old Cairo, while no similar notes have been found in any of the many hundreds of letters coming from Alexandria, or the cities of Tunisia, it is obvious that we are dealing here with a regular service, not with occasional favors. Such favors were of course extended by business friends in the East, just as in the West. When we find many letters sent from Asian cities which do not bear on their reverse sides notes of the character just described, this means that they were carried by acquaintances, either Jewish or Muslim. But where we do find such notes, they must be the work of

professional postal agencies. I attempt to explain why the fuyūj, the commercial letter carriers of the West, did not adopt the system of the eastern kutubiyyīn at the end of this section.

The survey of the relevant material presented in the following is perforce of a preliminary nature. Of some reverse sides of letters, which contained only the addresses, I possess no photostats. The notes of the postal agencies are often scribbled in such an abbreviated way that it is impossible (at least, for me) to decipher them without having at hand other examples that might be contained in manuscripts not yet studied for this purpose. And, as usual in the Geniza, often exactly the part of the note which is interesting for us is torn away. Yet, some basic facts emerge quite clearly.

Eli I ha-Kohen b. Ezekiel I, a scholar living in Jerusalem around the middle of the eleventh century, was an assiduous letter writer (I call him "I," to distinguish him from his grandson and namesake who was active fifty years later). Five letters of his were sent through 'Umar b. Yūsuf and Son(s) to a postal agency in Old Cairo, called three times "al-Ḥusayn b. Ṭāhir," and twice "Najā' b. al-Ḥusayn al-Anṣārī and Tamīm b. Najā'."[66] Anṣārī is undoubtedly a Muslim family name, and so is the proper name 'Umar. Najā' continued the business of his father and Tamīm most probably was his cousin, not his son, for otherwise the address would have been "and Tamīm, his son." (For further details, see below.) The same two agencies, that of 'Umar in Jerusalem and that of the Anṣārī family in Fustat appear at least nine times on letters sent by Israel b. Nathan-Sahlūn, twice in the full form as above,[67] five times with the father's name alone,[68] once as "al-Ḥusayn b. Ṭāhir and son,"[69] and once with the son's name "Najā' b. al-Ḥusayn al-Anṣārī," but without the cousin.[70] A third Jewish letter writer who used to forward part of his correspondence from Jerusalem to Fustat through these agencies was Abūn b. Ṣadaqa al-Maghribī, two letters being addressed to al-Ḥusayn b. Ṭāhir[71] and one to what we have assumed were two cousins.[72] A facsimile of the latter accompanies its edition so that the interested reader may form an idea how these notes of the mailmen looked. He should bear in mind of course that these complicated and partly effaced Arabic scribbles could be safely deciphered only because they recur in quite a number of instances.

In a letter sent from Jerusalem somewhat earlier than the three groups discussed, the forwarding agency was again 'Umar b. Yūsuf, this time not "and Son(s)" but "and Company." It is not difficult to surmise what happened. When a son, and later two more sons, grew up the courier disposed of his partners. Here, also his family name is provided, perhaps because the firm then was relatively new, but the evasive Arabic script permits a great variety of possible readings. The same applies to the family name of the receiving agency, which was different from that, or, rather, those, mentioned before, namely "al-Ḥusayn b. Mufarrij and Son."[73]

The four Jewish persons mentioned or alluded to above also used the services of another agency in Jerusalem, called Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir, in one case with the addition "and Son." In three instances the letters were addressed to one Najā' b. Ṭāhir, probably a brother of both Muḥammad and al-Ḥusayn and father of Tamīm, who, as was assumed earlier, was a cousin of Najā' b. Ḥusayn (see the family tree in n. 86). One letter entrusted to Muḥammad was forwarded by him to "the store of the perfumer 'Abd [a Muslim name] at the Bath of the Mice" (a bathhouse with this uninviting name occurs in other Geniza documents and is mentioned by Muslim antiquarians).[74] Several letters forwarded through Muḥammad bear the remark: "to be delivered immediately upon arrival," and it is not excluded that he specialized in the carrying of urgent messages.[75]

Other courier firms active in Jerusalem and Old Cairo appear in the Geniza letters. But before turning to them we had better consider first correspondence sent from other cities and partly handled by members of the families of kutubiyyīn with whom we have made acquaintance thus far. In Tyre, on the Lebanese coast, then occuying the prominence of Beirut today, seven letters were entrusted by five different Jewish persons to an agency called " 'Alī b. Aḥmad and his sons Aḥmad and Ḥasan." In three cases, in which the address is fully preserved, the letters go to Najā' b. Ḥusayn al-Anṣārī and his son al-Ḥusayn in Old Cairo, in two others to the same man in Jerusalem, in a sixth instance to 'Umar b. Yūsuf, also in Jerusalem. It is very likely that Najā' or his son carried the letters in person from Tyre to Jerusalem and from there to Old Cairo.[76] An eighth letter was sent by Moses b. Jacob, one of the Jewish persons referred to, from Tyre to Old Cairo through two agencies not known yet from another source,[77] but the same man sent two letters from Damascus to the Egyptian capital through one al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad to Ḥusayn b. Ṭāhir, the kutubī from the Anṣārī family met earlier.[78] A letter from the south Palestinian port Ascalon went to (or, rather, with) Najā' b. al-Ḥusayn al-Anṣārī,[79] while at least three letters from Tinnīs, sent by three different persons through agencies not yet identified, were entrusted to Ḥusayn b. Ṭāhir, who in one instance is called not by his family name but by the profession of his father or grandfather al-Numruqī, the Maker of Saddle Pads.[80]

Moses b. Jacob, the Cairene merchant who had used the services of the Anṣārī family while dispatching letters from Damascus, sent letters from Jerusalem through another agency to al-Ḥasan b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān in Old Cairo, and so did a Jewish scholar of Jerusalem writing to Ephraim b. Shemarya, the spiritual leader of the Synagogue of the Palestinians in Old Cairo.[81] The same kutubī was employed by Nahray b. Nissīm on the opposite route, namely, while writing from Old Cairo to Jerusalem.[82] The agencies appearing on letters sent from Tripoli (Lebanon), Acre, or Ramle to Old Cairo or from the latter city to Tyre, differed from those studied thus far as well as from one another, and

their occurrence is too sporadic for permitting conclusions.[83] Of particular interest is the reverse side of a letter sent from Aleppo to Nahray in Fustat. In addition to the address written in both Arabic and Hebrew by the sender and besides the usual pair of names of carriers it has a note in a third hand: "to be transmitted by Hiba etc." This seems to indicate that the agencies concerned did not keep a continuous service between the two cities, but transferred the correspondence entrusted to them to another carrier somewhere midway, say, in Tyre. Nor did the government postal service, as we know from Mamluk times, maintain a direct connection between Cairo and Aleppo. The adventures of this particular letter were not terminated with this. A fourth hand added: "To the island of Sicily." Nahray was on one of his trips to the West. Forwarding overseas was not the responsibility of the couriers, however, and no remark to this effect is found on the page.[84]

The data assembled above show that the couriers on the route between the capital of the Fatimid empire and its Asian dependencies were generally organized in partnerships, predominantly family partnerships: fathers and sons, brothers, cousins, and members of more ramified connections.[85] Three generations of the Anṣārī couriers were traced above as having been active in Tyre, Jerusalem, Ascalon, Tinnīs, and Old Cairo (a family tree is provided in the note).[86] Such partnerships were natural since one or several members of a company were on travel while another collected and distributed the mail.

There remains the question why solely letters on the Asian route bore notes of the character described. By its very nature, this route was different from the others represented in the Geniza. The route from Alexandria and other towns of Egypt to Cairo was comparatively easy and a great many fuyūj could engage in this occupation of carrying messages. The way to the cities of Asia led through the Sinai Desert and was far longer and more dangerous; here a regular service demanded a higher degree of organization. On the other hand, the couriers commuting between Egypt and western North Africa or Spain depended on the caravan traffic, and their deliveries were of necessity far less frequent than those of the kutubiyyīn of the East. Concomitant with these factors was another and presumably decisive reason for this difference. Although we do not know much about the imperial post in Fatimid times, it stands to reason that then, as under the Mamluks, the Asian route was the one on which the barīd mainly operated. The commercial mail, I suppose, followed here as in other respects the model of the government post. The names of the forwarding and receiving (or carrying) clerks used to be written on the reverse side of the official mail conveyed between Cairo and its Asian dependencies, and this usage was imitated by the couriers transporting the correspondence of the population at large. Another peculiarity of this route: only with respect to the Syro-Palestinian coast do we hear of a fayj traveling in a boat

(sailing from Tyre). He is described as *insān yahūdī,* a Jewish person, but his name is not mentioned.[87]

## 4. RIVER TRAFFIC

Wherever available, inland waterways during the Middle Ages were used as the main channel of transportation around the Mediterranean, as in most parts of Europe. Of all the countries to the south and east of the Mediterranean, only Egypt possessed a rich system of waterways, and it is perhaps correct to say that its economic ascendance over its neighbors owed partly to this advantage.

The importance of river traffic for medieval Egypt is brought out first by the fact that so many different types of craft were employed in it. The most specific of these was the ʿushārī, a Nile boat that was owned by men of higher standing for their personal convenience but also served as a commercial transport, for instance, for carrying bales of flax from Būṣīr downstream to the capital. It had a small cabin, mainly for the use of the captain, known as *ṭārma* at the time of Maimonides and still called by that name today.[1]

The general Arabic term for ship, *markab* (see below), must also have designated a special type of vessel, since it is differentiated in our records from other craft; it is the word most commonly used, in this context, referring to traffic on the Nile, as well as on the high seas.[2]

Barges of different sizes, called *jarm* (plural *jurūm*) were used for the transport of goods (and of those accompanying them). They had sails, as in ancient Egypt, and, in good weather, could enter the sea. This is reported by a French traveler of the sixteenth century and confirmed for the eleventh century by a Geniza letter speaking of twenty-one bales of flax reaching Tunisia in a jarm.[3] Nile barges regularly sailed from Rosetta to Alexandria by sea.[4] Their going aground in the Nile and perishing together with the goods of the merchants is also reported.[5]

Galleys, propelled by oars, plied the river over the long distance from Cairo to Qūṣ in Upper Egypt.[6] Another type of Nile boat, possibly introduced from Iraq, because it bears an Iraqian name, was the *sumayriyya.* In one case we hear of two young merchants traveling on such a vessel, together with their goods, down to Fuwwa on the western arm of the Nile, where it was customary to leave the river and to continue on a canal leading to Alexandria—if the canal happened to have enough water to accommodate a ship.[7]

Finally, mention must be made of the *khīṭī,* which, in frequency of occurrence in our records, is second perhaps only to the markab. It, too, is first mentioned in Iraq, where it designated both big ships sailing as far as China and small skiffs rowed by one man. The word

meant also "a tall, slender woman," and there is perhaps some connection between the two meanings. It must have had a reputation for speed, as the following detail, mentioned in a letter from Alexandria, shows. A party of travelers from Sicily had missed their boat and tried to catch it in a khīṭī. The writer of the letter was so sure that they would succeed that he entrusted the passengers of the khīṭī with his overseas mail.[8] Occasionally, other craft are mentioned as operating on inland waterways in Egypt.[9]

In the Middle Ages, on account of the comparatively small size of the vessels, there was no strict distinction between seagoing and river craft. Thus the Frisian ships, scheduled to take part in the Crusades in 1147 and 1187, set sail in Cologne on the Rhine, far from the sea.[10] Similarly, Cairo was a great naval base, and the Muslim men-of-war set out from there on their expeditions.[11] It is, therefore, not surprising that occasionally we hear in the Geniza of ships coming from the sea and continuing their way on inland waters and vice versa. Thus a man coming from Tunisia and proceeding to Old Cairo writes from Alexandria that he was unable to leave the boat—obviously because he had to keep an eye on the goods carried with him, and also that he could not unload certain consignments, as asked by the addressee, because they were stowed away in an inaccessible section of the ship. All this makes sense only if we assume that the craft was on its way from Tunisia directly to Old Cairo with only a brief stopover in Alexandria.[12]

Similarly, we read in a letter from Jerusalem to Old Cairo: "You mentioned in your letter that people traveled this year from Alexandria, but here they say that the ships of Ibn Abū [13] 'Aqīl set out from Old Cairo." [14] Ibn Abū 'Aqīl was a rich Muslim judge from Tyre, Lebanon, whose ships frequented the ports of the whole eastern Mediterranean during the middle of the eleventh century, and reference is often made to them in the Geniza records. According to the report from Jerusalem just quoted, they must have gone that year from a port on the Palestinian coast via Damietta or Tinnīs and the eastern arm of the Nile to Old Cairo, and were expected to set out from there to Alexandria and the West via the western arm of the Nile. It is perhaps not superfluous to point out that in Arabic and medieval Hebrew the word for "sea" also designated the Nile; therefore, in order to express the notion that a ship passed from the Nile into the Mediterranean, one said "it went out into the salty sea." [15]

The overwhelming testimony of the Geniza records proves, however, that, as a rule, passengers and consignments left the seagoing vessels in the Mediterranean ports and continued their way inland by other means of transport. This state of affairs, established beyond doubt through countless references, may have had its reason in the fact that navigating on the Nile was comparatively dangerous and required much skill and experience. As late as 1836, E. W. Lane wrote: "In consequence of the continual changes which take place in the bed of

the Nile, the most experienced pilot is liable frequently to run his vessel aground," and he also speaks about the sudden whirlwinds and frequent squalls, admonishing the traveler to exercise utmost precaution, however light the wind.[16] No wonder that we read in the Geniza papers so much on unpleasant experiences, while traveling on the Nile or about ships running aground. Expressions of extreme relief after arrival even from a short trip on the Nile are equally revealing, and so is a hasty note from Fustat, saying that the writer had seen a "trustworthy" boat, known to him, mooring on the mouth of the Khalīj, and ready for the departure to Upper Egypt; if the addressee still had the intention to travel, he should take that boat immediately.[17] The boats were likely often overcrowded and overloaded. Therefore, we hear rather frequently about goods that had fallen into the river, or, as if in surprise, that everything had arrived intact.[18]

A man who served persons belonging to the entourage of al-Malik al-Afḍal, the actual ruler of Egypt during the years 1095–1121, writes this: "[After having passed the night in Qalyūb near Cairo] I hired a donkey and its driver from Qalyūb to the neighborhood of Shaṭṭanawf up to the place where the royal riverboats anchored. We went down the Nile and stayed several days on the river, *enduring great horrors on it.* When we arrived at Manūf, the king [al-Malik al-Afḍal], may God make his rule eternal, went on land and so did my lords so-and-so; I and X. remained in the boat." It is noteworthy that for the description of a short trip on the Nile, made with the king's retinue, the writer uses the expression italicized above, the like of which is not found often even with reference to the Indian Ocean.[19] A contemporary of this man, a notable traveling from Cairo to Alexandria, also finds it necessary to write to his brother, after his arrival at the Fuwwa junction, that he had suffered much on the voyage.[20] About forty years later, the India trader Ḥalfōn b. Nethanel, while sojourning in Alexandria, receives this notice from his brother: "I arrived in Cairo fifteen days after having taken leave from you. I endured great hardships and had to change from one boat to another, which was, however, a blessing; for if I had remained on the boat which I had boarded first, I would never have made it at all."[21] Another India trader writes to Ḥalfōn: "I should like to tell you what happened to me on my way. The boat in which I traveled foundered [literally: broke asunder] opposite Shābūr [a locality on the western arm of the Nile], but, thank God, nothing of my goods was lost." The casual way in which this occurrence is registered suggests that it was by no means exceptional.[22]

The sufferings of the travelers on the overcrowded Nile boats are described in some detail in these passages selected at random. "After leaving you [in Fustat] I arrived in Minyat Sirāj, where the captain threw me out. I returned to al-Maqs [the port of Cairo] and with great difficulty boarded another boat, on which I was several times

on the brink of being drowned. But God let me arrive safely, after having been on my way for seven days." [23] This was written in Alexandria in December, 1214. Somewhat earlier, a scholarly person writes from Alexandria to his mother in Fustat: "I left you on Friday, but could not board the boat because of the customs officials. I arranged with the captain that he would moor where I would wait for him and take me on board. But when time ran out, I called a fishermen's ferry, paid them a dirhem and reached the boat. However, I did not find a place for me and was rather uncomfortable. We passed the Sabbath, then we moved [driven by the wind] [24] for several days and arrived on Thursday late in the evening." [25]

The long way upstream to Qūṣ must have been particularly exacting. As we have seen (p. 290, above), it could take forty-five to fifty days. One letter describes how the boat made a halt of a full five days in the provincial capital Akhmīm, where the passengers were forced to pay customs for the belongings carried with them, an unpleasant surprise, which also aroused the anger of the famous Muslim traveler Ibn Jubayr.[26] Outside the larger cities mooring was dangerous. "I suffered terribly because of the diseases of my fellow travelers and their disgusting odors. Things went so far that three of them died, and the last of them remained on the boat for a day and a half until he became putrid." When we keep in mind that the Muslims used to bury their dead on the day they died, we understand that the captain could not dare to land because of the general insecurity on the shores. Our traveler was recompensed by the hospitality lavished on him in Qūṣ, a trait reported for this emporium of international trade also elsewhere.[27] In contrast to the long halt in Akhmīm we read in one letter that galleys arriving in Qūṣ returned after a stay of only one or two days.[28]

The waterway connecting the two main cities of Egypt, Cairo and Alexandria, had a serious disadvantage in that the canal leading from the latter town to the Nile did not have enough water for carrying ships during certain periods of the year. In a letter from Alexandria, dated October 23 (1140), a merchant warns his correspondent in Old Cairo that if he does not come quickly, the Khalīj, or canal, would go out of use and his merchandise would get stuck in the Mediterranean port.[29] A similar warning is found, centuries earlier, in a Greek papyrus dated A.D. 710, where the Arab governor of Egypt makes a subordinate official responsible for any additional expenditure, in case the contributions from his district would not arrive in time to be transported on the canal.[30] It may be mentioned in passing that Queen Cleopatra was credited with the digging of that famous waterway and paving it with marble stones.[31] It had a checkered history and often must have been out of use, for we frequently read about heavy cargo having been sent from Alexandria by sea to Rosetta and from there on the Nile to Cairo.[32]

The voyage between Fustat and Alexandria took an average of five to six days according to the reports quoted thus far about the time actually needed for this trip by letters or passengers.[33] A letter in Arabic characters, but addressed to a Jewish person, also states that the writer left on a Friday and arrived on Wednesday morning.[34] In order not to take the risk of desecrating their Sabbath, Jews heading for Alexandria either boarded a Nile boat on Friday at latest—continuing one's travel in a ship on Saturday was of course permitted—or passed the Saturday in Qalyūb (about 12 miles north of Fustat) and set out early on Sunday on the main journey; for arriving on the holy day of rest was taboo. This strange custom of staying over Sabbath in Qalyūb is attested in three letters at least.[35]

Ships sailing on the main artery of the country were sometimes exposed to attacks by bandits. After his safe arrival in Alexandria, a man writes to his mother in Old Cairo: "We arrived safely, for God protected us from the bandits—a ship preceding us was taken by them."[36] A lively description of such an attack is contained in a letter from Qifṭ in Upper Egypt. The boat had cast anchor overnight in the neighborhood of Dahrūṭ, and everyone was asleep when the bandits attacked, hurling lances. The sailors and travelers fought back, and the writer of the letter, his father, and a scholar from Baghdad, who accompanied them, were wounded, but all took part in the fight, and finally the attackers were routed.[37] In a letter, in which reference is made to a rudder ordered by a notable, presumably for his Nile boat, an order of his for a sword is also mentioned.[38] The insecurity on the banks of the Nile on the route to Qūṣ has been alluded to above (p. 298). None of the letters containing such details conveys the impression of having been written in times of particular unrest. The case is different with this passage from a letter from Alexandria, which is preceded and followed by assurances that the writer, despite the urgency of the matters awaiting him in the capital, could not dare to undertake the journey at present. "No one can leave the city. Who does, either overland or by boat, is killed. Many have been killed while traveling on the Khalīj."[39]

Worst of all, the passenger was not even safe from possible assault by the crew, as the following extract from a complaint, submitted to the Fatimid caliph's chancellery, shows. When a young merchant and his partner carrying with them, in addition to goods, the very large sum of 500 gold pieces arrived at the Nile junction Fuwwa, the captain and the sailors of the boat in which they traveled murdered them and appropriated all their belongings.[40] We shall read about a similar occurrence on a seagoing vessel.

Travel on the river ironically suffered not only from lawlessness, but also by too-close supervision of the government authorities. When there was any claim, real or fake, against one of the passengers, the qadi, or judge, ordered the ship back,[41] or in the event that it had not

yet departed, the person concerned was taken down from the boat and detained until he had settled his affairs with the relevant government office. Of course, he would then have great difficulty in catching the boat again. When one paid customs duties, not only the amount of the sum to be paid, but also the type of coin to be accepted and its exchange rate usually formed a point of controversy between traveler and government officials. A prominent Tunisian merchant, who intended to travel from Old Cairo to Alexandria, had arranged to pay the customs duties for the goods of a friend entrusted to his care—or at least he believed that everything had been settled. He had hardly taken his seat in the boat headed for Alexandria, when five policemen arrested him and took him back to the office of the government accountant, where he had to make good a petty discrepancy in the assaying of the coins paid as customs duties. Meanwhile the ship had gone. He first took a boat to al-Maqs, the port of Cairo—the first stop after Old Cairo on the way north, but was likewise unsuccessful. The same happened at the next stop. Only on Monday night, two days after he had first boarded the ship, did he catch up.[42]

Government supervision of river traffic was particularly harassing for non-Muslims. The poll tax incumbent on them was paid at a certain time every year, and no one was supposed to leave his town before having fulfilled this obligation. Many troubles resulted from this regulation for those concerned. The following account illustrates how it could affect a trip on the Nile. The passage is taken from the letter of a young man writing to his mother in Old Cairo, after his safe arrival in Alexandria.

> As soon as I had settled down in the ship on Sunday morning, the day of my departure, a policeman appeared for the poll tax. He saw me in the ship and said to me: "Do you intend to depart and take along the poll tax which belongs to the government? I shall not leave you until you have come with me to the office." I had great trouble with him and implored him very much to leave me; I would give him the fees due to him.[43] Indeed, he did not leave me until I paid him two dirhems. I was sure, however, that he would come back and prevent me from departing. Therefore, I left the boat and went ahead, overtaking it at al-Rumayla, where I boarded it again after its arrival. I learned indeed that my apprehensions had been justified. After I had left, the policeman had appeared again to arrest me. I can imagine what you felt when you came to the boat and did not see me in it. I felt very sad about this.

The concluding remark is to be understood as follows: the writer had boarded the ship at its port of embarkation, while the family lived some distance from it downstream and were expected to bid him farewell when the ship passed by.[44]

Some cryptic remarks about the inadvisability of traveling on the Nile might have something to do with its being too exposed to the

vigilant eye of the government. "None of our friends are prepared to carry things overland; however, I learn that consignments sent on the Nile are not desirable." This statement is the more remarkable, as it was made to explain why the writer was unable to dispatch from Alexandria to Old Cairo a present consisting of such innocent things as pistachios and cheese.[45] A man writing from Tinnīs in Lower Egypt states: "I arrived here riding on a donkey; for I am carrying *silver* with me and thought, therefore, that riding overland was preferable." In the otherwise completely Arabic text, the word "silver" is written in Aramaic, no doubt as a matter of precaution; it is likely that for silver brought into Alexandria—where the traveler concerned was proceeding—some tax was levied, just as was the case with gold, as we know from another Geniza paper. For this reason, it was perhaps advisable not to arrive in that town by boat, but on a donkey, as anyone coming from the immediate environment of the town would do.[46] It may be, of course, that these and similar remarks to the same effect may have had other motivation than those assumed here.

Because of the close connection between seafaring and river traffic in those days, the organization and cost of transport on the Nile is discussed together with similar aspects of travel on the high seas.

## 5. SEAFARING: ITS ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

The only news to be reported to your excellency is the arrival of two Venetian ships with timber. However, I have not yet checked this matter, for people, as you know, sometimes exaggerate and sometimes understate. Others say that the Venetians have cancelled their passage altogether and that only an empty ship carrying an ambassador will arrive from them; others, again, deny this. In short, I am writing these lines before having had the opportunity to meet the competent persons. A ship arrived from Trapani [which is situated] on the tip of the island of Sicily—the same in which the proselyte Jew arrived a few days ago; however, I have not yet spoken to any of its passengers. As soon as I shall have exact details, I shall let your excellency know.[1]

Among the ships which arrived recently was one from Marseilles, in which an agent of the young R. Ephraim, who was here last year, had traveled. He brought queries from a distant country, addressed to our master Moses [Maimonides]—may his glory be enhanced—requesting his legal opinion about them. I hired a special messenger for the conveyance of these letters and ask your high excellency to deliver them.[2]

All the ships going to Spain, al-Mahdiyya, Tripoli [Libya], Sicily, and Byzantium have departed and have encountered a propitious wind. However, the ship of the ruler of al-Mahdiyya [which was on its way eastward to Palestine] has not yet moved. Our master Judah ha-Levi [the famous poet] boarded it four days ago, but the wind is not favorable for them. May God grant them safety.[3]

> A day after the completion of this letter, a barge arrived from Alexandria, which had been on its way for sixty-five days. Muslim merchants, who had traveled in it, told that they had left two ships behind them in that port, which were about to set sail for Almeria. The newcomers had not met any ships on their way which had set out from Spain, nor had they any information about them.[4]

The first three passages translated above are found in letters from Alexandria; the first two were sent around 1200 to a representative of merchants of Old Cairo; the third was written on May 11, 1141, and addressed to a prominent person in the same city. The fourth quotation is from a letter which went from Spain to Morocco a few years before the date of the preceding letter. Similar passages, often far more detailed and technical, containing the names of the boats concerned and exact accounts about their movements, are found in many Geniza records, as will be seen presently.

The reason for this interest in sea traffic is easily understood: the local market and the prices of goods for import and export were entirely dependent on it. It was these ships that brought wares from abroad and carried the prospective buyers of goods produced locally or destined for reexport. A letter written in al-Mahdiyya on August 9, 1048, is very revealing in this respect. Two groups of three and six barges, respectively, had already arrived from Egypt, also "the boat of Ibn al-Iskandar," but "*the* ships," the main convoys, were still on the high seas. Therefore the writer felt himself unable to judge how the local market would behave, and to advise his correspondent in Old Cairo what to buy in that city.[5] Sometimes, one ship could change the whole situation. In a report from Mazara on the southwestern tip of Sicily, a major distribution center of the Mediterranean trade during the eleventh century, we read: "I was happy to have sold those four bales of flax, since the ship of the Binzertī [family name, derived from Bizerta in Tunisia] arrived and the prices fell. . . . What I had sold for 30 quarter dinars is now worth only 26–7." In the same letter the writer states that after the termination of the seafaring season, the prices for lead rose—obviously because no additional supply was to be expected.[6] On the other hand, in a letter from the same port we learn that a hundred pounds of lead cost 8 quarter dinars during the winter, but 14 after the arrival of the ships—with prospective buyers, of course. In nearby Palermo, Egyptian flax fetched 70 quarter dinars in winter, but only 40 at the end of the summer. In the writer's hometown, Sfax, a port in southern Tunisia, the same commodity cost 10 dinars during winter, when all the merchants invested their capital in olive oil, Tunisia's main export article. Then in May it reached the high price of 15–19 dinars, varying according to the quality traded, but went down to 8 "after the arrival of the ships."[7] When soap in al-Mahdiyya was so expensive "that only the government was able to buy it" (cf. p. 267, above), its price was reduced from 2-½ to 1-⅞ dinars per

qinṭār "after the sailing of the ships."[8] The unexpected coming of overseas visitors made for "prices like Hell" (namely, for prospective buyers), while sales in the time "before the arrival of the ships" were "a blessed transaction."[9] In a letter referring to Fustat the writer says that he had given instructions to put his goods, Tunisian textiles, on the market only after "the people," which means the Tunisian merchants, "had gone down," that is, traveled home to their native country.[10]

The arrival of a single ship was able to make a stir even in a port the size of Alexandria, while an uncommonly quiet season in sea traffic put the whole local market out of gear. This is well brought out by the following passage from a letter from Alexandria, which was written around 1100. To appreciate its significance, one has to bear in mind that during the whole of the eleventh century Spanish silk was the type most commonly traded on the Egyptian market.

> As to silk: when the Spanish ship arrived, all business was at a standstill; no one bought or sold. Afterwards, small quantities were traded at the price of 21–22 [dinars] per 10 [pounds; a reasonable price, see p. 222]. Later on, when no other ships came, there was a demand for silk, but those who had it held back from selling; for during 33 days only one ship came and went; people became very much upset and confused, for there are only 23 days left until the Feast of the Cross [the term for the convoys to sail back to the West], but not a single ship has arrived from the West [i.e., Tunisia] and no news about ships has come through; in addition, the winds are unfavorable, they are neither east nor west winds. This very day people have offered 23 dinars for [10 pounds of] coarse silk, but no one wanted to sell. Everyone is refraining from selling until the situation clears up.

The same letter complains that no corals had arrived in Alexandria, either from Rūm—which here designates Italy and its islands—or from the West.[11] Another letter from Alexandria describes a similar situation, albeit providing a different explanation. "The boat arriving from the West has not brought a single merchant, goods or a letter. We were told that the people [which means the merchants] are planning to spend the winter in the West because of the bad prices. Should there be any news about the West and the arrival of people from there I shall write again."[12]

When a convoy of foreign ships reached a harbor, some local merchants would try to monopolize all the imports and thus drive up the prices—a practice against which the ancient Muslim lawbooks were already fulminating, namely with regard to incoming caravans. "Meeting the caravans prior to their entrance to a city" was illegal. A late letter from Alexandria contains the following report: "Six Venetian ships have arrived with a great mass of precious goods. However, our coreligionists monopolized everything that came in them, thus pro-

viding exorbitant profits for the Rūm [the Venetians] and doing pernicious things never experienced before in the customs house."[13]

Besides being carriers of passengers and goods, ships were substantial in the transmittance of mail. It is safe to say that at least half, if not the majority, of the Geniza letters from North Africa and Spain which we now hold in our hands were brought to Egypt in ships by friends of the writers and not overland by professional couriers. This fact is brought home by the many references to letters sent "in the ships" or entrusted to persons mentioned as embarking. A considerable number of letters bear express remarks to the effect that they were carried as a favor and not for payment. In addition to the phrase "deliver, and you will receive reward [from God]" (quoted p. 284, above), which is also found on overseas letters, including those written by persons from Spain,[14] one used the formula "given as a trust," expressed in both Arabic and Hebrew (the latter based on Isa. 25:1).[15] Sometimes, for instance, in a letter going from Alexandria to Palermo, this was expanded to "deliver your trust and you will gain safety," the implication being that the traveler will be protected by God on his passage in reward of his pious work of unselfishly doing a service to others.[16]

Reference has been made before to the custom of sending several copies of a letter with friends traveling in different ships. Official and business correspondence was simply copied, as is proved by extant duplicates and triplicates.[17] Preserved examples of personal messages show us that a man would write almost identical letters to various members of his family, such as his parents and a sister, or a widowed mother and his brothers, and if he happened to live in an island city, would ask a friend to send, if possible, one letter in one ship and the second in another.[18] We find also that two copies were entrusted to one business friend traveling from the West to Egypt, one to be forwarded from Alexandria and one to be retained by the carrier. As we remember, the way between Alexandria and Cairo was by no means safe at all times.[19] Jewish merchants from overseas who had no acquaintances in Alexandria entrusted their letters to a Jewish postal agency which took care of their forwarding. During the second half of the eleventh century such an agency was operated by Ibrahīm b. Farāḥ (Ibn al-) Iskandarānī. His name is provided here in order to save others the trouble of deciphering it, for his note: "forwarded by Ibrahīm etc." is frequently found on letters dispatched originally from Sicily or Tunisia, and many letters written by him have also been preserved, but his handwriting is outrageous.[20]

Before setting out from Egypt to Spain a relative of Nahray b. Nissīm writes to him: "I am planning to travel to Spain this year. Please do not leave me without letters at any time."[21] This wish implies that Nahray would make use of the services both of the overland couriers, namely during the winter when the sea was closed, and

of business friends commuting between Alexandria and Almeria or Denia. It was this combination between the professional overland mail and the opportunities provided by a lively maritime traffic which safeguarded steady communication between the Islamic countries of the Mediterranean area.

## 6. TYPES OF VESSELS

Just as we speak of a bus or train *ride*, so in Arabic and medieval Hebrew traveling in a ship is described as riding, and the ship itself is called markab, literally a riding vessel. In the Mediterranean, as on the Nile, markab was both the general word for ship and the designation of a special and most common type. Thus, in one letter, "the Sevillian" (that is, the ship of the man from Seville, Spain) is mentioned along with the same man's *qārib*, or seagoing barge,[1] while in another letter the qārib of a shipowner from Haifa, Palestine, is later on referred to as markab.[2] These seagoing barges, in Greek called by the same name, *karabos*, must have been rather strong, for they are frequently mentioned as covering long distances such as the route from Tunisia to the Syro-Palestinian coast.[3] They carried heavy loads. According to one letter, a single merchant had in such a qārib 31 bales, which constitutes a weight of about 15,000 pounds. In another record, a merchant had 19 bales in a qārib, but only 2 in the ship, markab, that it accompanied.[4] A qārib also carried passengers, normally merchants accompanying their own or their business friends' goods. They were used also by travelers other than merchants, as we can learn from the description of a journey from Palermo to Messina, Sicily, and other sources.[5]

In a letter from al-Mahdiyya, written on August 9, 1052, the barges are described as "uncovered" and not protected against attacks from an enemy. The writer, therefore, refrained from entrusting to them his friend's cargo at a time that he characterized with the biblical phrase "outside, the sword deals death" (Deut. 32:25).[6] No doubt, these open boats were partly or entirely propelled by oars and, consequently, when the sea was calm, were quicker in reaching their destination than sailing vessels. Such cases are reported for both the East–West and the West–East routes.[7]

In most records, these seagoing barges appear as independent transport vessels. In many cases, however—we had two above—they were attached to a larger ship. This relationship is expressed in various ways, sometimes rather awkwardly. Thus, one letter speaks about "the barge 'The Rose,' which is the 'ushārī [riverboat," see p. 295, above] of the ship that sails to Sicily." In another, a Hebrew letter, it is called "the maidservant" of the larger vessel.[8] This medieval Hebrew expression is reminiscent of the modern term service boat. The qāribs

accompanying ships might have had just such a function. At arrival at a harbor lacking deepwater docks, the larger ships must have moored in a roadstead, while the service boats transported passengers and cargoes to the shore. (Middle-aged travelers of the Mediterranean will remember that this was common practice even in this century prior to the construction of modern ports everywhere. To be sure, in our time, the debarkation boats were provided by the local port authorities.) [9] Sometimes, "the small and the large ship [markab]" are mentioned together, the "small" meaning the qārib. Besides its function as service boat, the qārib was vital in other respects. As we shall presently see, ships normally sailed in convoys. Thus this combination of a larger and smaller craft going together—which in the Indian Ocean was an even more constant feature than in the Mediterranean—arose from considerations of nautical technique rather than for protection against pirates. Under certain conditions of bad weather and rough seas, a smaller craft had more chances of survival than a big one, especially if the latter, as sometimes happened, had lost its sails or rudder. Thus according to the Hebrew letter referred to above, the "maidservant" boat picked up the few survivors of a main ship that sank on its way from Tripoli, Libya, to Seville. So far, no reference has been found in the Geniza records to lifeboats carried on a ship.[10]

Quite a number of special types of ships are mentioned in the Geniza papers. The most common was the *qunbār*—certainly pronounced: *qumbār*, a word, it seems, not registered in any Arabic dictionary. The Byzantine emperor Leon VI the Wise (886–912), in his book on the *Art of War*, says, however, that the Greek equivalent of qunbār *kombarion*, was derived from the Arabic word. His son, the emperor Constantin VII (913–959), describes the kombarion as a particularly large vessel. The Venetians, too, used this type of bottom, calling it *gombaria*. According to the Geniza records, the qunbārs operated all over the eastern Mediterranean, carrying heavy cargo and passengers. They never appear as men-of-war, in which capacity the Byzantines had known them.[11]

These heavy crafts, we may safely assume, were sailing ships. Cargoes and travelers were also transported in light galleys, propelled solely or mainly by oars. They were called *ghurāb*, which word originally perhaps was not understood as *raven* (the most common meaning of the word in Arabic, for in the East ravens were as ominous as they are in Europe), but as *edge of a sword* (the less-known connotation of the word), because of the galley's swift cutting of the waves. According to Ibn Mammātī. an Egyptian historian writing around 1190, over a century after the documents referred to here, a ghurāb was fitted with 140 oars. The oar-propelled galley had both tactical and nautical advantages over the sailing ships: as it could be turned with ease, it had better prospects of escape from attacks by the ubiquitous pirates. We read in one Geniza paper that a traveler was able to observe from

his ghurāb how pirates plundered a barge, qārib, in which he and his friends had goods. Furthermore, the galley was less dependent on the winds and could more securely break through the coastal waves on setting out or on returning—a particularly dangerous part of the journey, of which more later. Still, the galley as merchantman is comparatively rare in our records, and, since during the whole period under discussion, the eleventh and first half of the twelfth centuries, seafaring, even along the coast, appears to have been entirely dependent on the winds, it must have been mainly carried out in sailing ships. This practice might have been economically motivated, for sailing ships of middle size probably required less manpower than galleys propelled by oars and, with propitious winds, did better on the high seas.[12]

A number of other types of boats mentioned in the Geniza papers are discussed in note 13. Since Spanish Hebrew poets of that period, in describing sea voyages, refer to both sails and oars, it might be assumed that some of the unidentified types of boats appearing in our records were, like the Italian *tarida*, a cross between sailing ship and galley.[13]

The Geniza provides us also with some information about warships and naval warfare. Although the differentiation between merchantmen and men-of-war was not as complete as in modern times, it existed, as is proved by the different terms applied to each of the two groups and the use of "ship of merchants" for the former, and "warship" for the latter. Sometimes, however, it is expressly stated that goods were sent "in the warship." [14]

The most characteristic feature of naval warfare as reflected in the Geniza records is the tactical combination of heavy and light bottoms. The former was called *usṭūl,* which is derived from Greek *stolos,* "fleet," but designated in the Arabic of that period a heavy warship; the latter is represented by the *qaṭā'i,* or war galleys, which—most characteristically—are invariably mentioned in the plural. Thus we read in a letter from Alexandria, written at the beginning of the eleventh century: "The ships, my lord, are making their last preparations for their departure . . . they are only awaiting the completion and launching of the usṭūl and its departure, whereupon they will sail together with it. Tomorrow they will set the galleys afloat, for on this very day they have finished their repairs." [15] From another letter from Alexandria, written at approximately the same time, we learn that the departure of the convoy to the West was delayed only because it had to wait until the completion of the repairs of the usṭūl.[16] When in 1063 or 1064, the *qā'id,* or governor, of Sfax in southern Tunisia, revolted against the sultan of that country, a citizen of that town had the following to report: "The usṭūl [of the sultan] was moving from al-Mahdiyya toward Sfax. We had already loaded six skins of olive oil and five of pitch, when we learned about the impending attack; thus we left the rest of the goods behind. The usṭūl arrived indeed and

captured our ship on the very day it had set sail; the galleys took it to al-Mahdiyya, where it was unloaded and the sultan confiscated everything belonging to the Sfaxians and the governor."[17] From Sūsa, another town in Tunisia, which revolted against the sultan of al-Mahdiyya at that time, we also hear about a successful action of the latter's usṭūl.[18] On the other hand, when Alexandria was besieged by Jabbāra, a notorious pirate (see p. 327, below), by water and by land, the job was done by galleys.[19]

Occasionally we hear about the size of fleets actually employed in war. The Almoravid qā'id, or commander, Ibn Maymūn raided "the mainland" (probably of Italy) using 17 ships.[20] A little later, in a letter sent from Spain in spring, 1137, there is a reference to a flotilla of 27 ships routed by the Muslims, and in the same letter apprehension is expressed that "the enemy"—obviously the Genoese—would reappear in the following seafaring season with more newly built ships.[21] In a letter from Sicily—then in Norman hands, written in the fall of 1156, "the enemy"—the Almohads—were reported to have assembled 40 galleys in Bougie, Algeria, and others in other ports.[22] More is said later about a convoy of 22 merchantmen, each specified by name. Under certain circumstances, merchant ships also fought back when attacked. Thus we read (early twelfth century) about a Spanish ship setting out from al-Mahdiyya, Tunisia, defending itself successfully against an attack (presumably of Italians) and gaining the port of Sfax, after nightfall had separated the fighters. Another, North African ship, sailing shortly afterward, was less fortunate. It was rammed by the enemy and left lying on its side, after he had succeeded—as the letter emphasizes—in carrying off not only the light baggage and the passengers (only 11 persons escaped), but the heavy cargo as well.[23] In the clamor and confusion of battle, people are inclined to overestimate the number of participants. This is well brought home in an eyewitness report of 10 galleys attacking a flotilla of merchantmen. The report adds: "But people say it was 200 galleys."[24]

As far as the origin and building of ships are concerned, up till now only an indirect reference to the shipyard of Cairo has been found in the Geniza records. " 'Abd al-Salām, the supervisor of the construction of the government ships" delivers an unspecified sum to a Jewish banker, presumably paying back a loan.[25] We hear also that the "new Spanish ships" were eagerly bought by the merchants of Tunisia and put into immediate use (middle of eleventh century).[26] In the letter from Spain dated April, 1137, mentioned in the paragraph above, the writer reports that a particularly large vessel had been built in that country and that he hoped to travel in it from Spain home to Egypt as soon as the sea was safe from enemy attack. It is not impossible that this boat was identical with "the new ship of the sultan," that arrived in Alexandria on September 8, 1140.[27]

## 7. THE ORGANIZATION OF SHIPPING

The organization of shipping, as far as discernible in the Geniza papers, differed widely from that found in other spheres of the international trade. While most of this was based on a ramified system of partnerships, destined to minimize the risk of overseas undertakings, a ship normally seems to have been owned by a single proprietor and only exceptionally by two or more. There is little in the Geniza which could be compared to the provisions for joint ownership in ships so prominent in medieval European sea-contracts, or to the *loca,* or shares in a boat, which dominate Genoese shipping at the end of the twelfth and the beginning of the thirteenth centuries. The situation appeared rather as similar to that prevailing in Genoa at the end of the thirteenth century, when the accumulation of great wealth and power in the hands of the leading families made it possible to dispose of the system of the loca.[1]

I have collected details about 148 boats plying the Mediterranean, partly also the Nile, during the eleventh century, and only extremely few instances of joint ownership in a ship could be ascertained. An Ibn al-Iskandar (-Alexander) boat, called so after its captain, 'Ali, son of Alexander, was owned by two partners.[2] In the relevant letter, a complaint about the partners, the boat was operating on the Nile, but an Ibn al-Iskandar is frequently mentioned as commuting between Egypt and Tunisia[3] and also as having along a barge bearing the same name.[4] A case of a "share" in a boat came before the Nagid of the Jewish community of Egypt around 1100. The sums involved were small, 15 and 27-$\frac{7}{24}$ dinars. But these might have been due from a final settlement and thus could not serve as an indication that a Nile boat, and not a seagoing ship, was concerned.[5] There is one definite instance of a partnership in a maritime vessel, when in a letter from al-Mahdiyya, written in 1048, the addressee is advised that a consignment was shipped to him "in the barge of Ibn Akhi 'l-Wakīl [the nephew of the agent], of which one half belongs to the elder Abu 'l-Faraj."[6] The latter is almost certainly identical with the Qayrawānese merchant and notable Jacob b. Abraham b. 'Allān, whose byname was Abu 'l-Faraj and who, like Nahray, settled in Egypt.[7] There are one or two other notes about boats which might be explained as references to their being held in joint ownership. Otherwise the Geniza, so rich in information about partnership in general, is reticent on this point. Whether this was possibly because of the fact that the share of the Jews in this economic activity was perhaps comparatively modest, this question must be left to further research.

The list of proprietors of seagoing vessels is headed by persons con-

nected with the government: the sultan himself, members of the royal household, ladies included, governors (called qā'id in the West and *amīr* in the East), military commanders, viziers (called *ḥājib* in Spain), and, last but not least, Muslim judges. The constant need for military protection of all shipping explains, perhaps, why this lucrative business was dominated to a large extent by those who were able to provide, or easily obtain, this protection. We hear indeed of times when no transport other than the sultan's ships was available (Tunisia, beginning of eleventh century). One needed the personal intervention of a notable with the sultan to get one's goods shipped to the East—and for a very high price at that.[8]

The high personages owning boats are normally referred to by their titles and not by their names. It is not always easy to identify them. When we find in 1140 repeated reference to "the ship of the sultan" sailing from Spain to Egypt together with "the ship of the qā'id," it is reasonable to assume that the sultan Yaḥyā b. 'Aziz of Bougie, Algeria, and the qā'id Maymūn of Almeria, Spain, are intended, for these two similarly appear together in a treaty of peace and friendship concluded with Pisa on July 2, 1133, and the ship of the qā'id Ibn Maymūn is mentioned in a Geniza letter from Almeria, written in the same decade as leaving that port.[9] But a hundred years earlier, when a sultan's and qā'id's ships are mentioned either alone or together on the route between Tunisia and the East, as is frequently the case, they must have belonged to Mu'izz, the ruler of Tunisia, and to the governor of Sfax, already referred to above, for the qā'id's ship actually had that seaport as its Tunisian terminal. In one letter, "the ship of the Sultan" is referred to also as the ship of al-Mu'izz.[10] "The ship of the Illustrious Lady" is mentioned as accompanying the ship of the sultan, namely, Mu'izz; thus it is probable that his aunt and foster-mother Umm Mallāl or his sister Umm al-'Uluww is intended. The latter was given an exorbitantly large dowry by her brother, about which the historians have much to tell, and it is likely that part of her great fortune was invested in shipping.[11]

Of the many governors and military commanders referred to in the Geniza as proprietors of ships, the most colorful was Nāṣir al-Dawla b. Ḥamdān, who, during most of the years of terror 1062–1073, was the actual ruler of Egypt. This Nāṣir is described in our literary sources as a high-handed and adventurous soldier. The Geniza shows us that he was also able to appreciate the economic advantages of investment in shipping.[12] And so did his brother Fakhr al-'Arab ("the Pride of the Bedouins").[13]

The Muslim qadi was not merely a judge and a religious authority, but, in many cases, had far wider powers, which sometimes were equal to those of a ruler or governor. Under these circumstances, it is not astonishing to find qadis often as proprietors even of several ships. In particular, the qadis of Tyre and Tripoli, Lebanon, appear frequently

as shipowners during the eleventh century. We may compare this state of affairs with the dominant role of the Patriarch, the head of the Church in Alexandria, in the economic life of that city in the century preceding the Arab conquest.[14]

The largest single group of shipowners were the merchants. This applies in particular to the members of big business houses, such as "the great house" Ṭansāwī, an Egyptian flax merchant, Sharyānī, who was prominent in al-Mahdiyya, Tunisia, or Lakkī (trader in lacquer), a family to which various shipowners belonged. The fact that a number of proprietors of ships are called traders in a certain commodity, such as bananas, fish pickles, mace, odoriferous woods, pitch, or sal ammoniac, does not prove much, as these may simply be family names, just as others were called Mr. Potter, Mr. Saddler, and the like. In the case of about eighty shipowners who were neither connected with the government nor known by commercial activities, we may doubt whether they were merchants or skippers by calling. With regard to firms owning ships which figure in letters both from the beginning and the end of the eleventh century, however, it is perhaps correct to assume that they were mainly engaged in shipping.[15]

Considering that seafaring was regulated by the Christian (Coptic) calendar, one is somehow puzzled to find that the local Christians played only a negligible part in the shipping business. So far, only two proprietors of ships, who are expressly called Christians, have been found in the Geniza papers, although some other such persons, such as the frequently mentioned al-Iskandar and his son, also might have been Christians. Four hundred years of naval wars between Islam and the Byzantines probably had an adverse influence on the position of local Christian shipping.[16]

As to the Jewish share in this important sphere of economic activity, sporadic references to Jewish proprietors of ships (as well as to Jewish sailors, see below) are found during the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries—less in the Mediterranean than in the region of the Indian Ocean. In addition, quite a number of Tunisian and Palestinian shipowners bear names known from the Geniza as Jewish, such as Ibn ʿAllān, Ibn Yūnus, Ibn Shiblūn, or Mufaḍḍal (of Haifa). All these names also appear in the biographies of Muslim scholars, that is, people belonging to the same class as that represented in the Cairo Geniza. Therefore, pending further evidence, it cannot be ascertained to which religious group those persons belonged. In any case, the Jewish share in Mediterranean shipping during the eleventh and the subsequent centuries was smaller than in early Islamic times. This change was perhaps brought about less by Muslim competition and the Italian ascendancy than by the ever-stricter interpretation and observation of the precepts of the Jewish religion. As the desecration of the Sabbath by sailors was unavoidable and, further, as their employers were responsible for all religious transgressions perpetrated in their service,

shipping must have become less and less attractive for the scrupulous.[17]

Occasionally, we hear about the transfer of the ownership of cargo vessels. "He traveled in the barge that Zur'a, the agent of 'al-Jinānī' [the name of another ship], had bought." [18] A particularly interesting case was the forced sale of a Tunisian ship, which made its way from Cairo to Alexandria in six days and was sold there for 300 dinars, the equivalent of 12 bales of flax. This happened, it seems, because there was some claim against its proprietor. The consignments of the travelers, including 4 bales of pepper belonging to the writer of the letter, were temporarily held in bail by the government. A Muslim passenger, known from other Geniza letters as a shipowner himself, filed a complaint, most characteristically with the qadi of Qayrawān and not that of Alexandria.[19] Mention has been made above (p. 308) of the Spanish ships bought eagerly by the merchants of al-Mahdiyya.

Ships were normally called by the names of their proprietors, sometimes also by those of their captains. Thus one would say: "They arrived in 'Ibn al-Basmalī,'" or: "I sent in 'Mufarrij' and in 'Ibn Na'īm,'" or: "The consignment was taken down from 'Ibn Khallāf' and loaded on 'Sa'āda,'" all these being proper or family names.[20] In addition, ships would sometimes bear individual bynames. These would refer, for example, to some characteristic decoration, such as "that with the rose," "that with the gold," the latter belonging to a sultan.[21] It seems also that ships called "the blessed," "the auspicious," or "favored [by God]" were the property of rulers. We have already met such a usage with regard to the riverboats of al-Malik al-Afḍal and shall find it again in connection with a warship.[22] Mostly, the names given to individual ships were derogatory or laudatory nicknames, expressing the travelers' experience with them, for example, "the washtub," "the spinning top," or "the bride" (a beautiful ship), a byname found both in the first and in the second part of the eleventh century, "butcher's knife" (cutting the waves wonderfully?), or "Sirius" (the brightest star in the sky). Down to the end of the twelfth century, a similar situation with regard to the names of ships prevailed in Europe.[23]

In many cases, the shipowners themselves dealt with customers and made the necessary arrangements with them. In addition, every large ship seems to have had a manager who served as agent as well as purser. He made the agreements both with the merchants in general and with each passenger individually about the transport charges. He decided the most crucial question in which part of the hold each consignment would be stored, and, since the major part of the freight used to be paid after arrival, his permission was required for unloading. A Hebrew letter describes him as "the treasurer and commander" of the ship.[24]

Ships belonging to rulers had an "overseer," who, in addition to his substantial duties of agent and purser, had to spy on the passengers

and their cargoes. He was, therefore, a *persona non grata* in the merchant community. One such overseer could be in charge of two ships sailing from Egypt to Tunisia.[25]

As to navigation personnel, it is interesting to note that on larger boats, for instance, the sultan's ship sailing from Alexandria to Almeria, Spain, there were two captains in command (their names are given). This auxiliary captain may be compared with the vice-captain in the Rhodian sea law.[26] The mariners were called *nūtī* (pl. *nawātiyya*), a word coming from the same Latin or Greek term for ship from which the English *navy* is derived.[27] Even sailors on Nile boats were called thus.[28] Both captains and mariners received gratuities from the passengers at embarkation and both were permitted to do business, that is, to carry goods and to accept payment for this service. Thus we read in a letter referring to a boat going from al-Mahdiyya, Tunisia, to Alexandria: "The Jewish nūtī will bring you a bag with fourteen pounds of silk; please pay him one quarter dinar." In two other letters, sent from Alexandria to Old Cairo, a sailor called Bunāna (it seems, also a Jew) carries up to 4 bales of Tunisian goods. Remarks on navigation personnel as carriers of goods are particularly frequent in reference to captains. The statutes of Venice and other Italian and Dalmatian seaports presuppose a similar practice.[29]

In deciding which ship to choose for a passage, passengers naturally had to consider both charges and seaworthiness. The nicknames given to ships show that the merchants were well aware of their qualities. In one letter we read that a boat a merchant was warned not to use actually foundered. The frequent reference to *new* ships in the Geniza letters reminds one of the distinction in the legal situation between new and old ships made in the Rhodian sea law.[30]

## 8. ON THE HIGH SEAS

As in our own days, even a passenger not carrying merchandise had to make arrangements with a ship's agent well in advance of his journey. This was necessary even for the comparatively short crossing from Alexandria to Palestine.[1] For more extended journeys one tried to secure a passage immediately after the arrival of the boat in which one intended to travel. "The Rūm ships have arrived," an Alexandrian writes to his friend in Fustat, "if you plan to travel, let me know [and I shall book for you]; if there is still time, let me know as well."[2] The prospective traveler had to register in a list kept for this purpose by the nāẓir, or superintendent, of the port of embarkation.[3] Merchants who had to watch over their consignments must have boarded their ships quite a while before departure. From two letters sent from Alexandria it is evident that the writer, who had already "ascended" a boat sailing to al-Mahdiyya, expected to receive from his correspond-

ent in Fustat instructions as to whether or not he should carry the latter's merchandise with him.[4] Another merchant, writing from the same port to the same destination, emphasized that it was impossible for him to leave the ship "lest something might happen" (presumably to his consignments), wherefore he advised his friends to have certain errands done by others.[5]

Everyone went on board at least a day before sailing. The night before departure had a special name, "the overnight stay," a term used on the Mediterranean as well as on the Indian Ocean. The night was spent in prayer, in writing urgent letters (which we now read), or, where feasible, in some last minute business.[6] When the wind was adverse, the passengers were forced to spend several nights on board before departure was possible. The poet Judah ha-Levi had already been on the ship that was to take him to the Holy Land four days when, on May 11, 1141, a friend reported from Alexandria that he was still waiting for a propitious wind blowing from the west. A beautiful poem, addressed to this desired wind, possibly the last from the poet's pen, has been preserved, I assume because it was handed over to one of the visitors who came to bid him farewell.[7] Ha-Levi's Muslim compatriot and younger contemporary Ibn Jubayr once had to linger for a full twelve days until the ship in which he traveled could raise anchor.[8]

Departure could be delayed for reasons other than the absence of a propitious wind. Besides the menace of a hostile navy or of pirates lurking nearby, there were economic considerations of the shipowners. A boat, especially a bad one, sometimes was slow in collecting a sufficient number of passengers and consignments and lagged behind the convoys to its port of destination. When the delay became too long, an impatient traveler would leave the ship and entrust his consignments to the captain or to other travelers. He would do so, of course, only when he had other business in the port of embarkation, as we read indeed in a letter reporting such an occurrence.[9] Occasionally, tarrying too much could have disastrous consequences. A Tunisian who had traveled to Palermo with the intention of proceeding from there to Egypt, where he hoped to better his luck, had booked on a qunbār of a man from Tinnīs. The boat tarried until all the ships, "even those with the destination Spain," which obviously were habitually the last to leave the Sicilian port, had sailed. Finally, during "the overnight stay," the boat was sequestered, the consignments were carried to the "sultan's palace" and the passengers became stranded for the whole winter. "Thus, I remained in a foreign country without a dinar or dirhem, with my hands and feet cut off [that is, unable to find work]."[10]

The enthusiastic description by a Chinese traveler of a thirteenth-century Mediterranean ship, which carried thousands of people and had stores for wine and victuals and even weaving looms, is not echoed

in the Geniza letters, most of which, it is true, hail from the eleventh century.[11] They rarely speak about the number of passengers traveling in a boat. One ship, sailing from Palermo to Alexandria, carried "about 400 people," another going direct from Tripoli, Libya, to Seville had on board "36 or 37 Jews and nearly 300 Muslims." The second of these reports was written around 1140; the first is even later.[12] A letter from Alexandria describing the loss of three ships, carrying cargoes of a total value estimated at 200,000 dinars, specifies that 10 Jews traveled in them with consignments worth 7,000 dinars. If we assume that the average value of the goods transported by non-Jewish merchants was about the same as that of the Jews, we would arrive at a total of approximately a hundred passengers per ship.[13] In another letter from Alexandria, written undoubtedly in the second half of the eleventh century, a Tunisian merchant has the following to report on the eve of the Jewish New Year's Day (falling mostly in September): "Until today, there arrived from the island of Sicily ten ships, each carrying about five hundred persons." The writer mentions each ship by name, and almost all of them are known to us by other Geniza letters of that period. The testimony of the writer, a seasoned businessman known from many documents, has to be taken at face value, for he writes here to his son conveying to him intelligence about the economic situation in Alexandria. As has been pointed out above (p. 215), a certain adjustment might be recommendable in view of the predilection of the Geniza people for the number five.[14]

In letters sent from boats operating on the Indian Ocean, we read about cabins or rather compartments, which were sometimes shared with business friends. Incidentally, the word designating them is Malayan. Thus far, nothing comparable to this has been found in Geniza papers describing journeys on the Mediterranean.[15] One gets the impression that, in many cases, the passengers actually slept on top of the bales belonging or entrusted to them. "I intended to travel in it [in the 'blessed boat,' see p. 312, above] *upon* the consignment of my lord," remarks a merchant of good standing in an ancient letter written on vellum. "He let someone else [instead of himself] travel *on top* of his consignment and go to al-Mahdiyya with it," we read in a letter from Sicily from the second half of the eleventh century. Since one traveled by sea only in the summer, however, when there is little rainfall in the southern Mediterranean, the lack of cabins was perhaps not felt as such a great inconvenience as it would appear to us.[16]

It is almost superfluous to record that the passenger had to provide his own mattresses, bedding, and household utensils, including, of course, his own cutlery. The loss of these personal effects in a shipwreck was regarded as a disaster worthy of mention along with the loss of one's merchandise and money.[17] A prominent merchant from Palermo, who had forgotten his silver spoon in Old Cairo, asks the addressee in a letter written on his way home, and dispatched from

Alexandria, to send it to him "next year," that is, during the next seafaring season.[18] In the "large boat" going from Tripoli to Seville mentioned above, the passengers were advised to bring their own mattresses and bedding—but were assured that they would feel as comfortable as in their own home.[19]

It is most remarkable that almost no references to the difficulties of provisioning during a voyage on sea are found in the Geniza. Water and food were brought on board as near departure time as possible. As stated in one letter, their arrival served as an indication that the boats were about to set sail. A mishap, such as a precipitated departure, could entail hardship as we read in another letter: "I lacked provisions because I was overtaken by our sudden departure. Not one loaf of bread went with me on board. A favorable wind started to blow at early dawn on Friday so that we found no time to bake or to prepare a thing before sailing"—and this on a voyage from Alexandria to Tunisia! From this description it appears that our traveler did not provide himself with the dried bread described by Maqrīzī as the staple food of the Egyptian peasants.[20] We surmised above (p. 121) that carobs (St. John's bread) might have constituted a substantial part of a seafarer's diet. The money spent on provisions is listed among the losses incurred when a ship had to return to its port of departure, and we hear also of a case where a ship, on the way from Tunisia to Alexandria, had to cast anchor because provisions had run short—most probably because of an unexpected delay—and a messenger was sent to buy food in a nearby town.[21] In Judah ha-Levi's poems there are repeated complaints that he suffered hunger on the sea, and in one humorous poem, dedicated to his travel companion, he emphasizes that he would have starved had it not been for the considerate foresight of the latter.[22] Except bread, though, neither accounts nor letters specify the nature and cost of the rations taken by a traveler with him on a sea voyage. The scarcity of references to this subject may partly owe to the fact that people were generally not fussy about food, and (unlike modern man) regarded it as vulgar to enlarge on it.[23] Perhaps it reflects also an actual situation, namely, that the Mediterranean seafarer did not find unsurpassable the difficulties in providing for himself adequately.

As to the seasons of sailing, the sea was closed for almost half the year, throughout the whole winter. Even for the short voyage from Jaffa or Ascalon to a port of Egypt one waited "until the time of the opening of the sea." [24] "The sailing of the ships," which means the conclusion of the seafaring season, is often referred to.[25] On the other hand, so far, not a single instance of a ship setting sail for the high seas during the months of November through March has been found in the Geniza papers. When the Fatimid governor of Acre, Palestine, Badr al-Jamālī, urgently summoned by his caliph, set out in December, 1073, from that port to Tinnīs, Egypt, a distance covered by him in

four days, he was lauded as a particularly daring man. Sometimes, although very rarely, it occurred that ships, delayed by unfavorable winds, *arrived* during the winter.[26]

Normally, ships set out in the early spring. In a letter from Alexandria, dated Nisan 24th (which usually corresponds to a day in April), the writer emphasizes that on that very day four ships had left for Tripoli, Libya, to be followed by another one.[27] By Nisan 25th, all ships had left Ascalon, Palestine, in all directions, according to an eleventh-century report from that place.[28] The passage from a letter, dated May 11, 1141 (see p. 301, above), contains a similar statement concerning Alexandria. Sometimes the sailing had to be postponed. Thus we read in another letter from Alexandria, written by the same man but in a different year, that the ships going to al-Mahdiyya left only on the second day of the Coptic month of Baoonah (Paūni), which corresponds to our June 8.[29] July and August were regarded as quiet and favorable for seafaring, especially for oar-propelled vessels. On August 9, 1062, a boat arrived in Alexandria from Mazara, Sicily, which had been on its way for seventeen days, and at the same time a report had already come through that all the ships heading for al-Mahdiyya had arrived safely.[30]

For the return journey in the fall, it seems that ships set out earlier in the western Mediterranean than in the eastern. In the latter, both in Egypt and on the Syro-Palestinian coast, the time was the Coptic Feast of the Cross, the ʿĪd al-Ṣalīb, which was celebrated on the 26th or 27th of September. Usually it is referred to shortly as Ṣalīb or rather Ṣalībiyya, a word that also designates the winds blowing at that time.[31] In the West, August was the end of the summer season for overseas business. The ships heading eastward normally sailed at about this time. Most of the letters sent by boat from Tunisia are dated between the 10th of Ab and the 20th of Elul, which coincides approximately with the end of July, August, and the beginning of September.[32]

Correspondingly, the arrival in Egypt of autumn convoys from Spain, Italy, and Tunisia is usually reported for the end of August or slightly later. Thus we read in a letter from Alexandria, of August 28, 1140: "A Genoese ship has arrived, and it is said that it belongs to a convoy of twelve [literally: it is one of twelve]. However, the ship of the Sultan has not yet arrived and the people are worried." [33] This ship, which was coming from Spain, actually sailed into Alexandria on September 8, as we read in another letter from that town, which also reports that its sister ship, that of the qāʾid, or commander, had arrived some days before.[34] A letter from the same port, dated Elul 10th (second half of August), contains the following remark: "A barge arrived from al-Mahdiyya and [the people traveling in it] reported that all the ships were close behind." [35] Statements pointing to the same fact are found in other letters from Alexandria.[36]

During the winter, ships were dragged on land, and repairs made on

them. A report on five ships called by name and being fixed during the winter in Alexandria was mentioned above (p. 215). Of one of these ships it was stated that it was turned on its side for the repairs.[37] It is said even of a heavy warship that the merchants waiting for the completion of its repairs expected it to be pushed into the sea (so that the convoy to be protected by it might be able to sail).[38] Whether any structures comparable to a modern dry dock were used is not evident. The two rudders attached to a ship, called its "legs," could serve to keep it upright when it was pulled on land. This is evident from a report on an attack by pirates on merchant ships that had taken refuge in a harbor. Of one ship it is said that it was without yards and sails and that its two "legs" were on its stern (instead of midship) so that the attackers were unable to move it. Of two others, the following is reported: "The 'legs' of the two ships were on the land which caused that the enemy could not take them away." Illustrations in Arabic manuscripts draw the rudders of a ship disproportionately large in both length and breadth. Thus there was perhaps no need for a special structure when the ships were under repair. Anyhow, in springtime the sailing season was opened when "the ships were pushed into the sea."[39]

The predominance of the long- over the short-distance routes in international trade is discussed above (pp. 211–213). A few words must be added here on this point with regard to seafaring. When a boat is described as having arrived, for example, in Alexandria from al-Mahdiyya, or Palermo, or Tyre, Lebanon, this means that it had made that voyage directly and had not hopped along the coast from one anchorage to another. In some cases this is expressly stated, naturally only when special circumstances induced the writer to do so. Thus Nahray b. Nissīm's cousin reports to him from Alexandria at a time when only one ship had arrived from al-Mahdiyya and none from Tripoli or Sfax, and when he daily went to the seaboard looking out for arrivals from these ports: "This week, there arrived a Spanish ship from Spain, namely from Denia, in which a number of our friends traveled [four are called by name]. They did not enter al-Mahdiyya and have no news about it. . . . There arrived ships from Genoa and other Rūm places, and three other ships are expected from Spain."[40] Around 1140 we find an Italian Jew writing that a certain large ship would make the distance from Tripoli, Libya, to Seville, with a favorable wind, in eight days and no land would be seen on that route. This tallies with a poem written by Judah ha-Levi on his voyage from Spain to Egypt in the same year, complaining that nowhere was land to be seen.[41] When once, owing to enemy action, the ships heading for Tunisia were kept in the harbor of Alexandria, a merchant from al-Mahdiyya advised his representative in that harbor to repack the consignments in half-sized bales and to send them via Barqa, Libya, that is, in smaller craft sailing along the coast.[42] When a ship was forced by some

emergency to call at an intermediate port, the letter referring to this would supply an appropriate explanation.

This predominance of direct long-distance routes, which is perhaps at variance with our ideas of medieval seafaring, might have had financial as well as nautical reasons. The merchants wanted to avoid the delay and the additional cost—customs and so on—caused by entering too many harbors on their way. In addition, at least for Alexandria, we know that a particularly dangerous part of the voyage was the moment when a ship tried either to enter the high seas or to break through the coastal waves on its return. It was a common occurrence for ships to be on the brink of disaster or to founder in the very propinquity of the lighthouse of Alexandria. This is known from pre-Islamic times and reflected again in the Geniza. An important legal document (dated 1143) deals with a foreign Jewish merchant "who drowned in the sea near Alexandria," while his goods could be salvaged.[43] Two ships going to Sicily were forced to jettison about a hundred bales of cargo *taḥt al-manāra,* "just under the Pharos." Here again the goods could be recovered from the sea, but the advance paid for the freight was lost: once a ship had passed the lighthouse, seamen's law regarded it as having reached the open sea (early eleventh century).[44] The wife and other relatives of the Tunisian historian Ibn Khaldūn, who were on their way from Tunis to Alexandria in order to join the head of the family who had emigrated to Egypt earlier, perished in the sea just outside the harbor (in 1384).[45] The danger incurred by ships while breaking through the coastal waves was present also in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean.

In order to minimize the danger from hostile nature and men, ships setting out for longer distances normally sailed in groups. Often, however, these groups were split up by the very forces they had tried to defy. Therefore, we frequently read about ships arriving alone having left behind those in whose company they had set sail. Instances of both cases have been quoted above and more follow below.

The boats going from Alexandria to the West used to sail for a long time in sight of the African continent. All along the coast there were observation points, specified in many records, which would relay the positions of the ships to Alexandria, from where the representatives of the Cairene merchants would keep their business friends informed. Since the ships were mentioned by name in such letters, they must have been recognizable at some distance. Normally, such a report would conclude with the remark that the ships had passed out of sight and reached the high seas, or failed to do so. This "passing out of sight," or "crossing," *ta'diya,* as it was called, a very frequent term, is reported with a sense of relief rather than concern. The point of "crossing" was at least one day's sailing west of Tobruk.[46]

Similarly, boats arriving from Spain or other countries of the West would be reported upon to Alexandria as soon as they were sighted at

the observation points on the long North African coast of Egypt, and the Alexandrian merchants would relay this information to their friends in Cairo. This was done in particular when the ships were late because of adverse winds blowing from the east. In a letter written on the day after the Day of Atonement (which falls mostly in the second half of September) we read this: "No one has arrived yet from the West except the ship from Spain in which Makhlūf b. Mūsā al-Nafūsī[47] traveled. Another ship from Spain is expected. From al-Mahdiyya no one has arrived up till now. As to the ships which have been sighted, letters have been received from our coreligionists [at the observation points] that they are doing well. They are now in Bandariyya waiting for deliverance by God [i.e., they had to cast anchor awaiting a change of the wind]. I pray to God that he might deliver them."[48] Occurrences like the one reported here were most common (see below, *passim*). Even on the short stretch between Tinnīs and Jaffa, after seven days of east wind, a boat had to moor in the intermediary port of Ascalon in order to avoid being driven out to the West.[49]

"A little worm on a splinter"—this is how, according to an Arabic saying and a verse in a Hebrew poem—an eleventh-century traveler felt when he was out on the high seas in his frail craft.[50] Of course, most of the merchants whose letters are preserved in the Cairo Geniza were seasoned travelers who were not very sentimental about the tribulations endured at sea. Thus in a letter sent from Alexandria to Spain, the writer has this to say after his arrival from that country: "I arrived in Alexandria safely, after having experienced trials and sufferings, which would take too much time to describe. We almost perished, but the Creator saved us in his mercy and lovingkindness."[51] Another merchant, after having completed the same journey, simply states: "God decreed my safe arrival."[52] A trip along the Palestinian coast, as we shall presently see, could sometimes be very rough. A scholar, who had had such an unpleasant experience, writes to his friends in Egypt: "On the sea, I endured great hardships, but God granted safety for His name's sake."[53]

Sometimes, however, the Geniza letters are more specific with regard to dangers or disasters incurred on the sea. The following account is taken from the description of a voyage along the coast of Lebanon and Palestine in late October or the beginning of November:

> We set sail [in Tyre] for Jaffa, the port of Ramle. However, a wind arose against us from the land. It became a storm and drove us out into the midst of the sea, where we remained for four days, giving up all hope for life. We were without sails and oars and the rudder was broken. Likewise, the sailyards were broken and the waves burst into the barge (qārib). Realizing that our ship was a mere riverboat ('ushārī), small as a ferry, we cried: "Allah, Allah." We threw part of the cargo overboard and I gave up all hope for my life and for all that which I carried with me. I vowed one dinar from the proceeds of the textiles. Finally, through God's grace,

we reached Caesarea; however, both my clothes and goods were completely soaked. I did not find a place to spread out my things to dry. So I took domicile in the synagogue, where I stayed for five days.[54]

The puny coastal crafts form the subject of another vivid description of trouble on sea.

This is to inform you that I arrived safely [in Tripoli on the Lebanese coast] after a journey of eight days. . . . Water seeped into the ship and I worked the pumps [55] from the very day we left Alexandria. Each man had to bail fifty buckets of water in a shift, each bucket being the size of half a Byzantine barrel. Our turn came two or three times during a day and a night. Abu 'l-Faraj b. Joseph, the Spaniard, also took his turn. Thank God, we arrived safely, but a great quantity of linen got wet, and the merchants quarreled with the owner of the boat until he remitted a part of the fare. My own linen became only slightly damaged by water, about fifty pounds out of a total of two bales, really a negligible quantity.[56]

The foundering of a large ship on its way from Sicily to Alexandria with 400 passengers on board (cf. p. 315, above) is described at great length in a Hebrew letter. After a storm, which lasted three days, the ship began to draw water and the sea burst into it from all sides. All efforts to keep it afloat by pumping and throwing part of the cargo overboard were of no avail. The passengers entreated the captain to turn toward the mainland, which the latter was apparently reluctant to do. As soon as the ship touched ground, it cracked asunder, "just as one breaks an egg with one's hands." The passengers were let down "one above the other," but many of them were overcome and covered by the debris of the ship. The writer of the letter and his two travel companions, who had remained on the wreck, were advised to leave it quickly and to save themselves by grasping a piece of wood. The letter does not indicate how many lives were lost. On a ship en route from Tripoli, Libya, to Seville, less than one out of ten were saved. In another case, when three ships in a convoy of five foundered, and all the cargo, including the light baggage, was lost, only one of a company of ten passengers known to the reporter of the shipwreck died. This disaster is described as exceptional and the like of it is not often found elsewhere. Normally we hear of one or two ships lost out of a larger convoy.[57] In the memorial lists commemorating the ancestors and other defunct relatives of a donator, the remark "taken away in his youth" is common, but the notation "drowned in the sea" is rare.[58]

Considering the great frequency of references to seafaring in our records and the relative paucity of reports about shipwrecks, one is inclined to believe that the medieval crafts were not altogether unsuitable for their task. On the other hand, it should be noted that remarks such as "all ships have arrived safely" are also not very frequent.[59]

Under special circumstances and with bad luck, disaster could strike

even on a very short passage such as that from al-Mahdiyya to Palermo. A respectable merchant from Tunisia, on the way from his native country to Egypt via Sicily, had this experience:

> On my travel to Sicily I was overcome by events the like of which I have never witnessed. A great storm seized us on the sea and we were forced to land on an island called al-Ghumūr.[60] We stayed there for twenty days with no food other than nettles. When we set out from there we did not have any more the look of human beings. The seas tormented us for thirty-five days[61] and we were regarded as lost. For we sailed in four barges (qārib), but only ours survived. After arrival in Sicily we were so exhausted from our sufferings on sea that we were unable to eat bread or to understand what was said to us for a full month.

The writer concludes that in view of the state of his health and that of his family he saw no possibility of continuing his journey to Egypt that year, as planned.[62]

The report of another Tunisian about misfortunes on sea deserves to be presented here because it intended to comprise all the ships that left al-Mahdiyya for Egypt during one season.

> For your information: Seafaring was scanty this year, both outgoing and incoming. Outgoing from here: 14 ships took cargo; 4 of them returned to Sicily [that is, Palermo], namely, two belonging to Ibn Jarwa ["the little bitch"],[63] the barge (qārib) of the son of the Master of the Market[64] and the Nile barge (jarm). The ship of the Physician entered the harbor of Tripoli [Libya]. Two ships foundered, namely that of Abū Sa'īd and that of the Squint-eyed. The boat ('ushārī) of the former came out [of the sea][65] with ten persons who reported: we left the ship while it was sinking, but other people say: nothing of the kind. All those who had shipments in it listen to what people say. Concerning the ship of the Squint-eyed we were without news for two months after it had set sail from here and assumed that it had reached Alexandria. Then, one night, when coming into the vicinity of Salqaṭa,[66] it was thrown against the land and broke up. About twenty souls, women[67] and men, perished in it. Abū Ya 'qūb Ibn Shāma arrived here and explained that the place where they foundered was wild, and the rocks crushed the ship. This was a great disaster for many people, for large consignments went down with it. May God recompense fully and quickly those who suffered losses. About the rest of the ships we have no information, thus far. May God decree safety for them.

Thus, in that particular year, at least 7 out of 14 ships setting sail in al-Mahdiyya did not reach their destination Alexandria.[68]

There were disasters other than shipwrecks which entailed great losses to the persons hit by them. Often we read that on account of bad weather ships had to return to the port of departure. "We set sail and I stayed at sea for fifteen days, despairing of my life, then we returned to the Pharos."[69] After the conclusion of the seafaring season once a

single ship arrived in al-Mahdiyya carrying the message that all other ships that had set sail from Alexandria for Tunisia had been forced to turn back.[70] A rumor to the same effect had reached Tunisia in another year.[71] Even from the Syro-Palestinian coast, ships sometimes were unable to break through to Alexandria and had to go back as far north as Tripoli.[72] Such a return was often catastrophic for the merchant concerned, for he thus missed a whole business season. In addition, the customs paid were not returned; nor were the fares—or rather, the parts of the fares paid before the journey. Also, the costly provisions were either used up or spoiled.[73]

Even worse was the similar and equally frequent case of ships being compelled by adverse winds or other weather conditions to call at a harbor other than their destination—an unpleasant experience not unknown to modern man, as far as air travel is concerned. We had five such cases in the report from al-Mahdiyya just quoted. We read of boats which were forced to anchor in Tarsus, Asia Minor, instead of Cyprus; in Tripoli, Libya, instead of Sicily; in al-Mahdiyya instead of Tripoli; in Tunisia instead of Egypt (coming from Sicily), and so forth. The ship bringing the tidings of the case mentioned last had itself been driven to the Tunisian coast, but managed to change course and arrived in Alexandria before all the other ships from Palermo, al-Mahdiyya, and Tripoli.[74] Such mishaps even occurred to ships sailing around the Nile Delta, as when a boat on its way from Alexandria to nearby Rosetta had to seek refuge in the bay of Abukir.[75] Even when a ship was not driven to a hostile coast, such a change frequently meant a great loss for the travelers, for, as our records explain, merchandise that had a good market in the port of destination could not be sold at all in the place at which the ship had been cast up by chance.

During a heavy storm, medieval sailors took recourse to the costly expedient of jettisoning, familiar to readers of the Bible from the book of Jonah 1:5. The practice was so common that a traveler, when congratulated on his safe arrival, would be asked whether any part of the cargo had been thrown overboard. In a moving appeal to a congregation written in Hebrew on a piece of vellum, a Jerusalem pilgrim from Europe reports that he lost all his belongings by jettisoning.[76] A ship whose name is repeatedly mentioned in the Geniza record on one occasion jettisoned a hundred bales, two of which belonged to the writer of the letter mentioning the incident (and devoting to it not more than one out of eighty-four lines).[77]

No wonder, then, that people tried to protect themselves against the vagaries of a stormy sea by magical means. Formulas designed to effect this have been found in the Cairo Geniza, and, as was to be expected, they do not differ very much from those found in Muslim literary or documentary sources. For superstition transcends the boundaries of religious communities. An instruction, written in an eleventh-century

scholarly hand, contains "holy names," to be inscribed on a new earthen vessel, which, when thrown into the sea, would calm its stormy waters.[78] The figure of the master of the "holy names" must have been familiar to the seafarers of those days, for it was immortalized in the *maqāmas* of the Persian-Arabic poet Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (d. 1007) and his Spanish Hebrew imitator Judah al-Ḥarīzī (around 1215). Maqāma is a literary form comparable to the modern short story, but unlike the latter, it is written in rhymed prose in an elaborate, witty style, full of allusions and, as a rule, has as its hero an itinerant litterateur, who succeeds in extracting money from people under the most fantastic pretexts. Al-Ḥarīzī's 38th maqāma—strongly reminiscent of Hamadhānī's 23rd, called "The Amulet"—describes most beautifully a storm on the sea and the wild despair of all the passengers, except one. When the storm quieted down without having done harm to anyone, the man who had remained calm all the time was pressed by the others to explain his strange behavior. With great solemnity, he confided to them that he had nothing to fear, possessing, as he did, a "medicine book," containing magic formulas for all situations in life, including danger from "the angels of the sea"; he was prepared to sell "holy names," for a piece of gold apiece, and before the voyage was over, he had made a handsome sum of money. An old acquaintance, who recognized him, understood that all this was sheer humbug, but refrained from exposing him. These maqāmas show that not everyone was prepared to rely on magic, despite its seemingly widespread use, for safety on the seas.[79]

Some data have been given in passing on the speed under sail of medieval ships and the duration of voyages, and more are to be found in the Geniza records. For the convenience of the reader, the data collected thus far are arranged in a table at the end of this section.[80] We may assume that, as a rule, the number of days passed on the sea was indicated only when there was a special reason for doing so. The journey of 13 days from Palermo or al-Mahdiyya to Alexandria was fast (no. 8) and that of 17 was good (no. 7), while one of 25 days included a stop at Tobruk (no. 10). A passage of 35 days was excessively slow and is therefore mentioned, albeit without comment (no. 9); tarrying 50 days between Sicily and Egypt was absolutely exceptional and is explained by particularly atrocious weather conditions (no. 5). The student of Arabic literature is reminded of Ibn Khaldūn's trip from Tunis to Alexandria in 1382 which lasted 45 days.[81] The normal conditions may be learned from our number 11: a merchant in al-Mahdiyya sending a shipment to Cairo by boat expected that it would arrive at its destination not later than one month after its dispatch. Since the voyage from Alexandria to Cairo took approximately 5 days and the shifting of the cargo from a seagoing to a Nile boat also involved some delay, an average of 20 days must have been the maximum of time normally expected to be spent by a traveler on

the sea route between Tunisia or Sicily and Egypt. This tallies with the 25 days reported for the voyage from Marseilles to Alexandria, which seems to have been regarded as good speed. The number was provided because of the importance of the news brought by the passengers (no. 2). The data about short distances are all combined with reports about specific hardships and are therefore of limited value. That a leaking ship could make the way from Alexandria to Tripoli, Lebanon, or Lādhiqiyya, in 8 days (no. 19) is quite an achievement.

The details on sailing speed preserved in the Geniza will have to be studied in connection with those mentioned in Arabic and contemporary European writings and even those known from late antiquity. For the technique of sailing did not change much during the Middle Ages until the fifteenth century, when a revolution in rigging took place.[82] The notice preserved in a Hebrew letter that a ship would reach Seville in 8 days, when sailing from Tripoli, Libya, not in sight of the land (no. 15), is paralleled by a statement of the Muslim geographer al-Ya'qūbī that the trip from Tunis to Spain would require 10 days sailing along the coast of North Africa and then an additional day for crossing over to the mainland of Europe.[83] There is, however, no point in comparing the 65 days needed by a boat, *shaḥtūra*, for the journey from Alexandria to Almeria (no. 1) with Ibn Jubayr's voyage from Ceuta, Morocco, to Alexandria on a Genoese vessel, which required only 30 days. Moreover, he was kept moored for some time by a storm at the island of Sardinia, from where he needed only 12 days to finally reach Egypt.[84] Our numbers 1 and 4 seem to imply that under certain conditions, a smaller craft could do better than a regular sailing ship. But with normal weather, it could certainly not compete with a big vessel. Anyhow the data provided here will have to be scrutinized by experts in maritime history.

*Duration of Sea Voyages*

Long Distances

| No. | From | To | Days | Details |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Alexandria | Almeria, Spain | 65 | Small boat, leaving behind in Alexandria two ships ready to set sail for Spain. |
| 2 | Marseilles | Alexandria | 25 | Carrying important news. |
| 3 | Alexandria | Amalfi, Italy | 72 | Moored in Constantinople and Crete for some time. |
| 4 | Palermo | Alexandria | 29 | A small qārib. An accompanying ship, markab, not yet arrived. |
| 5 | Palermo | Alexandria | 50 | Twenty days of east wind blowing after the Feast of the Cross (September 28–29). |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | Al-Kanā'is (on the coast of western Egypt) | Palermo | 25 | A letter brought on board in al-Kanā'is arrives after 25 days in Palermo. |
| 7 | Mazara (near Palermo) | Alexandria | 17 | Travelers in that ship reported the death of the *condottiere* Ibn Thumna (1062). |
| 8 | Palermo or al-Mahdiyya | Alexandria | 13 | "Two ships arrived from Palermo and the qārib of al-Matāridī from al-Mahdiyya in 13 days." |
| 9 | Al-Mahdiyya | Alexandria | 35 | The writer announces his arrival after a journey of this duration. |
| 10 | Al-Mahdiyya | Alexandria | 25 | Intermediate stop at Tobruk. |
| 11 | Al-Mahdiyya or Qayrawān | (Alexandria) Cairo | one month | "I sent it a month ago and, God willing, it has arrived by now." |
| 12 | Tripoli, Libya | Alexandria | 25 | "Bringing no goods, only congratulations for the Sultan." |
| 13 | Alexandria | Tripoli, Libya | 40 | Sailed on Sivan 1 (early May or late April), returned once to port. Great hardship. The boat drew water all the time. |
| 14 | Alexandria | Constantinople | 18 | The ship sailing to Amalfi, above, no. 3. |
| 15 | Tripoli, Libya | Seville | 8 | Recommended as going as fast as this, not reported as having actually done it. |
| | | Short Distances | | |
| 16 | Palermo | Messina, Sicily | 8 | Kept by a rainstorm for some time in Baqṭas, modern Patti. |
| 17 | Al-Mahdiyya | Palermo | 35 | See page 322, above. |
| 18 | Tinnīs, Egypt | Ascalon, Palestine | 7 | "At the moment we left Tinnīs we were seized by an east wind." |
| 19 | Alexandria | Tripoli, Lebanon, or al-Lādhiqiyya | 8 | Pumping water from the boat all the time. |
| 20 | Acre, Palestine | Jaffa | 5 | "Great hardships on the sea." Left Acre on Sunday, arrived in Ramle (10 miles from Jaffa) on Friday. Probably stayed overnight in Jaffa. |

## 9. PIRACY, WAR, AND OTHER MAN-MADE DANGERS

Even more than the whims of nature, the greed and cruelty of men formed a constant menace to the medieval seafarer. First and foremost was piracy. Much material from the Geniza about this subject has already been published, especially letters in the Hebrew language entirely devoted to it; much more, however, in particular the many short but precise and precious references in Arabic letters, still await publication.[1]

On the one hand, piracy was part and parcel of the Holy War against Christendom. For this reason, we read so much about captives from Rūm brought to Alexandria or Ramle, Palestine, or other places, where they were ransomed, or, contrariwise, about Muslim merchantmen attacked by Italian or other European freebooters and Jewish captives from Egypt ransomed in Constantinople. On the other hand, by the eleventh century, Muslim pirates had taken advantage of the various schisms that divided the Islamic world, and, in the end, Muslim shipping itself became their easy prey. Eastern Libya, the land between Barqa and Tobruk, seems to have become their base, just as Barbary, western North Africa, played a similar role in later centuries. It is perhaps for this reason that the "passing out" into the open sea of ships heading for the West is reported with so much relief in many a Geniza letter (see p. 319, above). "Those muslim pirate freebooters, who had been the advance guard of Muslim naval strength,"[2] became the scourge of their own people. It seems that the Fatimid rulers of Egypt used the pirates of Barqa for chastising the Sunnite West in the same way in which they employed the Bedouin hordes of the Hilāl and Sulaym, namely, to destroy a country whose prosperity was a thorn in their sides. Jabbāra, the amir of Barqa, could openly receive payments from his victims in Gizeh, a suburb of Cairo, as we read in this passage from a letter from Fustat:

> The merchants who had gone to Barqa have arrived here, stripped of everything. They had to leave their bundles behind until they would pay money here in Old Cairo. On the very day of their arrival, they collected one-thousand and three-hundred dinars, which they paid in Gizeh to Jabbāra's representative. The latter is about to return to Diyār (or Abyār) Qays, where he will fetch their bundles and transport them to Gizeh. [Notice that the writer was unable to find out whether the addressee's or his own consignments were among the merchandise brought to Diyār Qays.] I learned that Jabbāra emptied the ship [i.e., the heavy cargo that was not brought to Diyār Qays], put everything into his own boat and sailed for Alexandria. I hope this will be the case. When it arrives, kindly be present during the unloading; if our consignments are in the boat, ransom them with any sum possible.[3]

Together with Jabbāra, the amir of Barqa, his father Mukhtār, and his relative Yabqā, as well as a number of other "Arabs," that is, pirates of Bedouin origin, appear in the Geniza records of the earlier part of the eleventh century. In documents dated 1027, 1028, 1031, and others coming from the same period, they were active in raiding Byzantine ships. From the numbers of Jews brought to Alexandria on such occasions—eighteen, twelve, "many," respectively, one may conclude how large the number of Christians thus affected must have been. Later on, we hear only about Jabbāra's attacks on Tunisian merchantmen. This might be mere chance. It stands to reason, however, that the crushing victories of the Byzantine navy over the Muslims of Sicily and Africa in the thirties and forties of the eleventh century discouraged the Barqan pirates, while the Fatimids gave them new objectives for their raids. In 1051–1052, Jabbāra changed sides, burned the pulpits from which prayers had been said for his former overlords, and acknowledged the suzerainty of Muʿizz b. Bādis, the ruler of Tunisia.[4] Soon we find a report in a Geniza letter showing that Jabbāra laid siege to Alexandria by land and by sea (see p. 308, above).

As becomes a freebooter, Jabbāra served also as a protector against other pirates, levying a heavy tribute, called *ghifāra*, on travelers in times of danger, and he also engaged in mercantile shipping, carrying goods from Barqa to Tunisia (in 1039).[5] The great variety of roles played by one man—protagonist of the Holy War, plunderer of Muslims, protector against other pirates, commercial skipper, Fatimid, anti-Fatimid—seems very bewildering, but has its parallels in other places and times. From the bynames of other pirates, such as Mahdī, called the horse-trainer, it appears that persons from very different walks of life chose piracy as their vocation.[6]

While literary sources occasionally make allusions to the activities of pirates, they are almost completely silent about a subject that mattered most for the bulk of the population: the fate of the travelers affected by it. The copious reports from the Cairo Geniza fill this gap.

First of all, a person captured by a pirate lost his freedom. He was sold on the slave market, or whenever the circumstances allowed, he would be offered for ransom, as this was expected to bring a higher sum. In addition, he lost his merchandise, the goods entrusted to him, all his personal belongings, his money, even his clothes; he was literally stripped of everything. Moreover, he had to endure hunger, beatings, and all kinds of torture. These appear in most reports. The pirates may have been partly motivated by general human sadism—about which we have learned so much in our own century; however, they also had a practical aim: to induce the victim, as well as those interested in him—as a rule, his coreligionists, for his family was far away in his homeland—to get as much ransom money as possible in the shortest possible time.[7] In the case of women, girls, and boys, the additional threat of

violation was present. A certain protection for females and boys was provided by the prospect that a higher ransom would be obtained, if there had been no prior sexual abuse. The trick of extorting money by the threat of violation was so widespread and old that there existed a Talmudic rule that no person should be ransomed with a sum higher than usual, since such a practice would impose an unbearable burden on the community.[8]

Nothing is more characteristic of the relation of the medieval state to its subjects than the fact that the ransoming of captives was not undertaken by it, but left to the religious community to which the victims belonged. How this great deed of charity was organized is discussed in *A Mediterranean Society,* Volume II, chapter v.[9] The standard ransom money for a Muslim, Christian, and Jew alike was 33-1/3 dinars per person, that is, 100 dinars for three. This is known from literary sources and echoed in many a Geniza letter. Of course, there were exceptions to the rule. Thus we read about a woman who was ransomed for 24 dinars.[10] Or, a pirate would send one of his prisoners as a "present" to a Jewish notable, whereupon the latter had to reciprocate with a gift equal to one and a half of the regular ransom price.[11] In the case of distinguished prisoners, middlemen would buy them for a high price, in order to extort an even higher ransom from their families or coreligionists. A letter referring to such an occurrence mentions sums of 40, 50, 70, 87, and 100 gold pieces (last third of eleventh century).[12] In a document from Alexandria from 1180 a captive for whom 60 dinars had already been paid was not freed until the full sum of 100 dinars stipulated for his liberation was delivered.[13]

Merchants of different race and creed knew well that they all were in the same boat and tried therefore, where circumstances allowed, to alleviate the lot of fellow merchants who had been taken captive. A particularly interesting case is reported in a letter from Alexandria, which was published long ago, but whose real implications have not been recognized so far, because the editor mistook *mlf* (which means Amalfi, a flourishing maritime city in southern Italy) for *mlk* (king). Merchants from Amalfi—of course, Christians—brought to the Jewish community of Alexandria three captives who had been taken from a ship, robbed of everything, beaten and almost killed, by Rūm, Byzantines or Italians. The Amalfians asked the community to deal mercifully with these unhappy people, as they themselves had done, and declared that they were prepared to sell them for the same price they claimed to have paid themselves, namely, two for 18 dinars each and one for 16. The sums indicate that these captives had been sold on the slave market. At the end, they were content with two for 16 and one for 12 dinars respectively.[14]

When a person prominent in public life was captured, the procedure of redeeming him was of a more diplomatic nature. "I have written to the Nagid—may he live for ever—and asked him to request the com-

mander of the auspicious [i.e., royal] warship [or: the fleet] to rescue the Gaon and his children in Tripoli when he happens to anchor there." This we read in a letter to a notable who is also admonished to remind the extremely busy Head of the Jewish community (who was court physician to the ruler of Egypt) to attend to this matter. As head of the academy, the Gaon was a high religious dignitary and thus regarded as belonging to the caliph's entourage. A person of such description when captured by one of the petty rulers of the Muslim maritime cities would be freed at the request of the authorities, in particular if such a request was underlined by the presence of a warship.[15]

As intimated, no clear-cut distinction between piracy and war can be made in the period under discussion. Therefore, one is often at loss to decide which of the two is intended. Thus, when we read about African and Spanish merchantmen attacked by "the enemy" off the Tunisian coast, one is in doubt whether freebooters are meant or the navy of some Italian maritime town.[16] One Geniza letter describes how the raiders of Ibn Thumna, a Muslim condottiere in service of the Normans, while on the way to Girgenti, Sicily, attacked a Tunisian ship, taking all the textiles carried in it, but leaving the olive oil, most probably too bulky a load for ships on a military expedition.[17] A little later, a boat on its way from Mazara, Sicily, to Egypt, after having met "the enemy," had to take refuge in the nearby harbor of Sciacca and had to unload there, because conditions at sea made any further voyage impossible. The letter reporting that incident and mentioning also in general "the burning of the ships" was written in 1063 or 1064; as the Norman conquest of Sicily was in full swing at that time, "the enemy" referred to probably were Normans.[18]

A lively description of an attack on a convoy of merchantmen is contained in the letter of an Alexandrian merchant who was on his way to Sicily. The convoy—four ships are mentioned by name—had sought shelter in a harbor, it seems for a prolonged period, for a number of passengers—the writer included—stayed overnight in town, and not, as usual, on board. Some boats had their twin rudders stuck into the ground (see above, p. 318), and no attack was expected. Suddenly, at nighttime, ten galleys appeared, each manned with a hundred warriors, some of whom disembarked. The attackers tried to pull the ships away or to set them on fire, but succeeded only in plundering one ship, which they finally had to give up, leaving it stranded on the rocks. The wind was against them and also was not strong enough to kindle the firebrands, which were extinguished by the crews and passengers, the writer included, working in shifts. The losses listed in another part of the letter give the impression of having been incurred not only that night, but also on another occasion, perhaps a previous encounter with the enemy.[19]

In war, even civil war, goods belonging to the civilian population of the opponent were forfeited when captured. We read above that the

sultan of Tunisia confiscated all the merchandise belonging to the inhabitants of a town whose governor had disavowed his allegiance to him.[20] War had other surprises in store for the seafarer; when, in 1201, the ruler of Tripoli, Libya, was about to invade Tunisia, he forced the sailors of all the ships anchoring in his port to man his own warships, and the passengers traveling in them were stranded there for many months.[21] A similar occurrence is reported approximately two hundred years earlier for Alexandria, when the merchants refrained from loading because the navy had conscripted all sailors in the town for its galleys, and neither the merchants nor the skippers were sure what would happen next.[22]

It has already been stated that in anticipation of trouble, merchant ships made it a rule to sail in groups and not alone. Moreover, in times of particular danger they formed regular convoys, accompanied by warships. We read repeatedly in the Geniza records that the merchantmen were ready to set sail and waited only for the men-of-war to join them.[23] In addition, at such times, marines were stationed on the merchantmen themselves.[24]

What could happen to such a convoy is vividly described in two complementary letters, written in Alexandria around the middle of the eleventh century. Altogether, twenty-two ships are mentioned by name and the fate of each is recorded. In addition, the names of the business friends of the addressee, a total of twenty-five, traveling in them and what happened to each are reported. The convoy set sail in three successive groups, called "sailings" (*iqlāʿāt*), the first two consisting of eight bottoms each. The first group consisted of a qunbār and a barge of the amir, or governor, of Alexandria; three other barges, one belonging to a vizier, two khīṭīs, one entitled "al-Rā'isa," "the Chief," owned by a lady, and a craft called markab, the general word for ship. The second group consisted of the ship of the sultan Muʿizz of Tunisia, a ship and a barge belonging to a man from Seville, Spain, and several other craft, among them one qunbār (as in the first group). These ships sailed on Monday before Pentecost (month of May), but two days later were overcome by a storm, in which the ship of the sultan and another boat perished; the writer of our letters and the addressee both had goods and friends in those ships. The convoy took refuge in two anchoring places on the North African coast, one of which, (Ra's) al-Kanā'is, is frequently mentioned in our records and is still operating today as a local harbor. (The late King Faruk had a summer palace there, and since Ra's al-Kanā'is means "Cape of the Churches," he renamed it Ra's al-Ḥikma, "Cape of Wisdom.") Only five ships belonging to the first group succeeded in passing out into the high seas; for in addition to the storm just mentioned, there was another calamity. "The enemy," certainly the Byzantine navy, "which had complete mastery over the sea," captured one boat and only because of its being busy with it did the rest of the convoy escape. The remaining ships

had to return to Alexandria, however, where the governor ordered them to be unloaded, obviously because he did not see any possibility of sending out a second convoy.[25] A similar occurrence, the unloading of ships ready to sail because the sea was closed on account of enemy activity, is referred to in another Geniza letter from the same time.[26]

It was not only war and piracy that threatened the life, freedom, and property of a medieval traveler on the Mediterranean. Sometimes he was not even safe from the crew of the very ship in which he traveled. A case of murder of two young merchants using a Nile boat was described above (p. 299). A letter from Alexandria, written about 1130, recounts how two Jewish notables, journeying on an Italian ship from Tunisia to Sicily, were robbed by the crew of large amounts of money and valuable consignments, as soon as they arrived on the island. Here, too, the Nagid was requested to intervene on their behalf. Such occurrences must have been frequent, as the Rhodian sea law contains detailed provisions dealing with cases of the robbery of passengers by sailors, either on command of the captain or on their own initiative.[27]

Despite all dangers and hardships connected with seafaring, the people represented in the Geniza letters were willing to assume the risks. "Losses on sea are made good quickly—if God will," says the writer of the report on the ill-fated convoy summarized above, adding other maxims used in similar circumstances: "May what has been lost be a ransom and atonement for what we still have" and "Seeing what others have suffered, we must be consoled." [28] In a letter from Tyre, Lebanon, written approximately at the same time, the writer alludes to his great losses on sea, but simultaneously expresses his thanks to God who had replaced what he had lost many times over. In accordance with the polite ways of that age, he adds that he would not have mentioned his misfortunes at all had he not known the warm interest of the addressee and would not want him to learn what had happened from others.[29] The equal distribution of losses among the passengers of a ship or a convoy is discussed in the concluding section of this chapter.

## 10. PACKING, SHIPPING, AND STORAGE

People mostly traveled as carriers of merchandise. Extended travel, as a rule, meant transport. This explains why the Geniza records abound in details about one almost as much as about the other. As the subject is necessarily of a more technical nature, only its main features are outlined here.

In view of the long duration of a journey, the imperfect means of transport, and the ever-present danger of damage by seawater, adequate packing was of utmost importance. Its technicalities had a great

influence on the very organization of commerce. When we so often find that the same merchant traded in commodities as different as silk (or other textiles) and hides, the reason was that consignments of the first type were often packed together into one bale with those of the second, so that they were covered by them. A very ancient document from the town of Tunis, written on vellum, lists twelve bales each containing forty-four or forty-five robes and five hides, as well as four bales, each of which comprised fifty to fifty-two packages of sanitary napkins and twenty-nine hides. Similar combinations are found in other bills of lading.[1]

The merchants had a technical term for this "covering." Thus they would list consignments of garments, each of which were "covered" by larger or smaller quantities of mantles, all put inside sacks made of coarse drill. The amount of each commodity in every bale would be carefully listed, as was the case in another document on vellum, dated 1024 and coming from Tunisia, as did the one just mentioned.[2]

Goods used as "covering" should not be confused with the packing materials proper. About thirty-five different types of packing materials and containers used in the Mediterranean trade have been noted so far in the Geniza records, varying, of course, according to the commodity carried in them. Often our letters make mention only of the containers, as their very nature was sufficient to indicate their contents. Thus "skins" sent from Tunisia invariably meant "receptacles of olive oil," if it was not stated expressly that they contained soap or something else. As flax was the staple good going from Egypt to the West, unspecified "bales" meant consignments of flax. A similar practice was in vogue in the India trade.

The most common packing material was a strong canvas, which was highly valued and not always obtained easily. Remarks about them are frequent: "X. wanted to have the canvas in which the silk was wrapped and pestered me for it. I said to him, 'Buy another one and I shall pay for it, for I do not want to unpack the bale.' Finally, he bought a canvas for four and half [dirhems] and I paid for it." "I have another load of sumac, but find no canvas to pack it. Had I canvas, I would have bought more of this commodity." "X. left the canvas with Y. in the market; please let him testify in the presence of two witnesses well known here that the canvas is my exclusive property." The second of these quotations comes from a letter from Ascalon, Palestine, the first and the third from Alexandria. In a letter from Upper Egypt, we read that the writer was unable to continue his business trip to the Fayyūm, because the government had laid its hands on the canvas.[3]

Another textile, frequently mentioned as a container, was a sack of coarse drill, *tillis* (related to French *treillis* and English *trellis*), which was used mainly for grain and also designated a measure.[4] Pillowcases appear regularly as receptacles of silk, and also of indigo.[5] Coarse hair-

cloth served for the transport of wax, and oblong rugs (known as *nakhkh*) were spread over the bales to protect them from the rain.[6] In many cases, the material of which the various bags and sacks were made is not indicated.

Next to woven fabric, skins and leather bags were the most frequently used containers. Not only oil, wine, and other liquids, but also such goods as indigo were carried in skins of different descriptions and sizes. Leather bags or knapsacks were used for more precious items, such as silk or parchment.[7] It seems that in medieval maritime transport, hides of animals had taken the place of the Greco-Roman amphora and other earthen vessels and had relegated the latter to third place as receptacles for the conveyance of victuals and other commodities. To be sure, a great variety of jugs, jars, pitchers, bottles, and pots appear in the Geniza records as containers used for transportation, but for the large-scale overseas trade, skins were preferred. An underwater photograph of a Roman merchantman, which foundered near the French Riviera, shows it to be completely filled with tall jars. Had an eleventh-century boat been similarly well preserved, its cargo probably would have looked very different. In a letter written in or around 1061, a Tunisian merchant orders 100 large containers, *ẓarf,* for oil in Egypt "those imported from Syria or Barqa." The same term is used for receptacles of alum in Almeria, Spain, in 1141, but there, too, the material from which they were made is not indicated.[8]

For transportation by sea, baskets of various forms and names were of no smaller importance than earthen vessels. Such common articles as copper, glass vessels, antimony, sal ammoniac, and even books were carried in wickerwork crates or other types of baskets. One single document, dated July 5, 1072, refers to seven items packed in such a way. A wickerwork crate containing 218-½ pounds of sal ammoniac, worth 2,065 dirhems, cost around A.D. 1000 only 4 (or 6 or 10) dirhems.[9]

Wood, of course, was rare around the southern and eastern coasts of the Mediterranean and served as packing material only for a limited number of goods, such as books, corals, beads, and saffron.[10] Paper was used for the transport of smaller quantities both inside Egypt and in the intercountry caravan traffic. Thus we read about 1-⅓ pounds of Syracuse (Sicilian) silk, sent by land from al-Mahdiyya, to Egypt in a *qirṭās* (which is derived from the same Greek word *chartes* as the English *card* and *chart*). As is well known, the Romans used papyrus as packing bags—paper then was not yet in existence. Still, when a famous Persian traveler visited Cairo at approximately the time the Geniza letter just mentioned was written, he found it very strange that ordinary commodities bought in the bazaar were taken home wrapped in paper.[11]

Despite the high standards attained by the glass industry of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, glass vessels were rarely used for transportation in the Mediterranean area, even less, it seems, than in

the India trade. Once, we read about a glass jar with minced salt fish sent from Alexandria to Old Cairo. An *'ullāba* containing Bible codexes (sent in the opposite direction) could hardly mean anything but a case made of tin or lead. I do not know, however, whether these metals were used at that time for the manufacture of containers.[12]

The term *ṭarḥ* (literally: deduction, but used in the sense "weight of a container deducted from the total weight of a shipment"), which was taken over by most European languages (cf. English *tare*), is not very common in the Geniza documents for the simple reason that the tare is rarely indicated in them. To quote an example, in an ancient account on vellum from Tunisia, containing many items, only four entries list the weight of the containers, as follows:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bale of lacquer, total weight | 289, | tare 14 pounds | |
| " " " " " | 288, | " 17 " | , including deduction for some of the material which had been spoiled |
| Skin with indigo, " " | 69, | " 3 " | |
| " " " " " | 67, | " 4 " | [Thus!].[13] |

This example, like countless others, also shows that packages of the same type in one shipment generally were of approximately the same weight. The most common type of package was a bale called 'idl, which originally designated (half) a camel load. Its standard weight was 500 pounds, but in fact it often contained far less. Thus, in another ancient account on vellum, in which the details for thirty-five bales of flax are clearly visible, five weighed exactly 500 pounds, one 510, seventeen between 490 and 498, five between 482 and 489, and the remaining seven, 472 or less.[14] Similarly, according to a letter contemporary with the account just mentioned, 1,050 pounds of shelled almonds were sent overseas in two bales.[15] About a hundred years later, around 1135, sixty bales of lacquer, weighing 500 pounds each, were dispatched from Aden in South Arabia to Old Cairo.[16] Bales of approximately the same weight are found in a number of other documents.[17]

There also appear in the Geniza records series of 'idls (or bales) that were of a far smaller capacity. Thus, in the account from Tunisia, dated 1024 (already quoted), most of the twenty-three bales of flax listed weighed between 339 and 350 pounds, while the standard weight for bales of pepper must have been 375 pounds at some time, for a bale containing 378 pounds was regarded as being 3 pounds overweight.[18] Finally, according to the document quoted above in connection with the tare, an assortment of goods, ranging from sugar and rose marmalade to indigo and lacquer, was packed in bales weighing between 230 and 289 pounds.[19]

Smaller in size than the 'idl or bale, but also very frequently used, was the barqalū, probably related somehow to Italian *barca,* boat.

This term makes its appearance, often together with 'idl, in documents as early as the beginning of the eleventh century. Thus a large consignment dispatched at that time from Alexandria to Tunisia on the account of a leading merchant of Old Cairo comprised 179 bales and two barqalūs. This seems to mean that the merchant had intended to send 180 bales; when there was not enough merchandise remaining to fill a bale, he made instead two packages of the smaller type. The standard weight of a barqalū seems to have been 200 pounds.[20]

It seems strange that a "ship bale" should have been of such a comparatively small size. One has to take into account, though, that it was common practice to throw goods overboard during a storm (see p. 323, above), and in the event of an attack by pirates or other enemies, it was at times advantageous to be able to move a part of the cargo with ease. One letter states expressly that at a time when no ship except the sultan's would sail, the goods were packed in barqalūs.[21]

While the terms for "camel load" and "ship bale" carry with them a connotation of weight, this is not the case with two other extremely frequent words designating forms of packings, shikāra (or *shakāra*)—also, it seems, derived from the Italian—meaning bag or sack, and *rizma*, a bundle, which has found its way into the English language in the form of *ream* (of paper). In a letter, sent from Aden to Sicily around 1150, a merchant writes: "I am sending you a bag," using the Arabic term which was in vogue in the India trade, "called [in the Mediterranean] shikāra." [22] The shikāra, which appears in the Geniza documents from the very beginning of the eleventh century, was used for commodities of all types and sizes. Weights noted at random range from 25 to 250 pounds.[23] The rizma, or bundle, could be of any size, often, however, it designates the largest unit sent in one consignment. Thus one single rizma would contain eight sacks, shikāra, with silk of various kinds, one sack with tin and copper, twenty-five hides and sacks of coarse drill and canvas.[24] In another such "bundle," at least eight merchants, not connected by partnership, sent goods of various types, such as silks and other textiles, clothes, and tin.[25]

Packing was a complicated affair and required much attention. One merchant would supervise the work done for several of his business friends and partners, and report about its progress to them, as we often find in the Geniza. As for the marking of the packages, the greatest variety is to be observed in our records. Normally, the name of the sender or the receiver, or both, in Arabic and in Hebrew letters, or sometimes only in one of the two scripts, was written in red earth or with indigo on the bales. In many cases the name of the merchant accompanying the goods was indicated. These details were written on patches or wooden plates fastened to the tops of the bags and also on all sides and protruding parts. In skins, they were engraved on the "buttocks" or ends. Religious formulas, such as "may God be its preserver" or "be it blessed," would precede the names. In addition,

since the porters presumably did not know how to read, consignments were often marked with figurative designs. A merchant would use different marks at one and the same time, as, for example, "two crescents" on a bale going in one ship and "strings of pearls and a palm tree" on another, dispatched simultaneously. In some letters, the writers would draw the figures used by them, and it is not always easy for us to make out what they were meant to represent. Nahray b. Nissīm frequently used, among other marks, the six-cornered Star of David. It should be remembered that this sign was not a typically Jewish emblem at that time.[26]

In the preceding pages, we have reported various examples of commodities as different as silk and tin packed together in one bundle. Many more examples could be given. Thus we find a package (rizma) of mace, the spice made from the peel of the nutmeg, inside a wickerwork basket of sal ammoniac; or a flask of the particularly valuable perfume musk inside a bale of yellow myrobalan, an Oriental fruit used for dyeing and tanning; and even a package of khazz silk inside a consignment of wax. Whether this strange practice originated in the desire to protect a particularly valuable commodity (as explained above, p. 333) or had other reasons, say, the evasion of customs duties, is difficult to say.[27]

From this practice we must distinguish another, which was extremely common in the Mediterranean, but entirely absent from the India trade, namely, the so-called *'ilāwa*—the attaching of a package to a larger container by fastening it on top of the latter. Almost everything could be sent as such an appendage. Examples noted at random include such different items as beads, mastic, sal ammoniac, sugar, and cinnamon.[28] The quantities forwarded in this manner were by no means negligible. Thus one 'ilāwa contained 614 units (of at least a thousand) beads, worth 1,200 dirhems, the cost of freight, customs duties, and other expenses for the transport being in this case only 35 dirhems, or less than 3 percent of the value of the consignment, while normally these would amount to 7–10 percent (see pp. 343 ff., below). This explains perhaps why these appendages were so popular.[29] 'Ilāwa is an ancient Arabic word, and it stands to reason that this particular practice was transferred from the caravan traffic to maritime transport.

On the boat itself one tried to stow one's bales "in the best of places," "all in the hull, none on the deck," but despite this and the care taken in packing, we often read about bales that broke open during a voyage at sea and about goods, in particular textiles and especially flax, spoiled by water. If the boat carrying the shipments was not in adequate condition, the skipper would indemnify the merchants by reducing the freight (cf. p. 321, above). Sometimes warnings were expressed not to use "those ships," as any flax sent in them would get wet. Particularly troublesome was the case of goods contaminating each other in contact, as when a load of pepper which was packed above another of wheat

became discolored by it, or when mercury leaked out in a bale that contained other merchandise. The disintegration of bales also provided an opportunity for rapacious sailors and captains to appropriate some or all of their contents. Thus, a Spanish merchant, writing from Sicily, had this to report: "All the bales in the Sevillian (i.e., the boat belonging to a man from Seville) broke apart and their contents became mixed. The skipper of the ship looted the bales. Had not Abu 'l-Faraj been with him, nothing of our business friend's goods would have been saved." In general, losses caused by the ripping of the package were a serious risk for any shipment sent overseas. Thus we read in one case that twelve out of twenty-three, and in another even that seven out of eight, bales of flax sent from Egypt to Tunisia were damaged in this manner—an enormous disaster for the merchants concerned.[30]

On the other hand, we rarely hear about shipments lost. This was certainly due to the fact that they were normally accompanied by their proprietors or their business friends, or in the case of greater merchants, their agents, who sometimes had the legal status of slaves. Consignments might be lost in times of a general upheaval, as during a civil war, when a ship and part of its cargo were confiscated. When an item belonging to a merchant from a country not involved was lost in such a case, his claim for indemnities was dismissed. Simple, accidental loss is seldom reported.[31] For the reason just mentioned, theft during transport was also not very common. When 20 of 176 pounds of a load of tragacanth gum, going by boat from Alexandria to Old Cairo, were stolen, the slave carrying them was suspected. In order to discourage such occurrences, the bales were weighed after arrival.[32]

As packing was an intricate and costly affair, and perhaps also for protection of the merchandise, receivers of consignments were slow in opening them. This would be done only if prospective buyers were in sight. "I hope to find customers for my goods," writes a merchant from Qayrawān, "so that I shall be able to unpack my shipment during this winter." [33] In a letter from Old Cairo, addressed to a widely traveled business friend sojourning in Jerusalem, the writer remarks that he was unpacking his bales only gradually on account of a slump caused by an epidemic.[34] Goods enclosed in shipments for other merchants often had to wait until the latter would find it convenient to open them. As we read in a letter from Sicily, a small charge was made for "the untying" of goods thus carried even in the bales of acquaintances or friends.[35]

In view of the fact that bales were left unopened for a long time, we would imagine that the problem of storage was very acute. This, however, as the Geniza records amply prove, was not the case. Upon arrival, the goods of foreign merchants would be provisionally stored in a caravansarai, or directly deposited in the storehouse of a representative of the merchants. There also existed special warehouses for this purpose, and the sender would be informed that his bales had been

"set up" in reasonable order "in a good place."[36] Local merchants had storerooms either at the bazaar or in their own houses, sometimes both, or possessed adjacent to their living quarters a special building comprising several, for example, three, storerooms, called *makhāzin* (from which the English word *magazine* is derived), of which a *khazzān*, or storekeeper, would take care. Traders engaged in business over long distances had storerooms or houses in other cities as well.[37] At times, the bales were not stored in the warehouse itself, but on a special site adjoining it. It seems, however, that this was done not because of lack of space inside, but for special reasons, such as to have easier access to the goods or perhaps because the rent was cheaper. Thus the addressee is asked in one letter whether he would like to have his goods stored inside the warehouse or in its court.[38] Sometimes these "magazines" must have been of considerable size. In a letter from Tunisia, the writer states that he could not locate a shipment of tin in the family storehouse, but would continue his efforts to find it.[39] The comparatively easy availability of room for storage tallies with the fact that living space in general was plentiful, according to the Geniza records. This matter is discussed in detail in my chapter on housing.[40]

## 11. COST OF TRANSPORT

The Geniza letters teem with pertinent information on the cost of travel and transportation by water. The senders of those letters did not write for us, however, but for the addressees, who knew all about the trip undertaken and the shipments dispatched and needed only some additional information to keep their records complete. The details required for an exhaustive study of the subject—the ports of embarkation and destination, description of the consignment, its weight and value, the freight and the customs paid—are rarely given in full, and very often all the expenses incurred during a journey (namely, the freight, customs, and other dues) are lumped together. Only by careful comparison and combination with related documents are we sometimes able to supply the missing items. Since many documents still await such scrutiny, much additional research is necessary before the rich Geniza material on the subject can be fully utilized.

In order to give the reader an idea of the manifold expenses connected with medieval transport in the Mediterranean region and in order to let him participate in the difficulties experienced in this section of Geniza research, a single account, which is fairly complete and detailed, is discussed here. It deals with a bale of "purple," that is, crimson-colored textiles, weighing 474 pounds and having, at the place of dispatch, a value of 66-¼ dinars. The average weight of a piece of cloth was approximately one pound; thus one "purple" would have cost its producer only about a seventh of a dinar. For us, to whom

purple is a royal or ecclesiastical emblem, the comparatively small price is somewhat surprising. But since we read in another Geniza letter of the same period and referring to a consignment sent from the same place, that eight pieces of "purple" were bought for 1 dinar, we are assured that the price indicated was perfectly normal.[1]

The bale was dispatched from Old Cairo. Of course, this is not stated expressly. It can, however, be safely inferred from three combined facts: the customs were paid "at the arsenal" (*ṣināʿa;* the English word *arsenal* is derived from the Arabic through Spanish), which was, in Fatimid times, the main Nile port of Old Cairo.[2] The bale went by boat to Rosetta on the left arm of the Nile and from there the short distance to Alexandria on camel's back; thus its place of dispatch could hardly have been any town except Old Cairo. In addition, the sender, ʿArūs b. Joseph was a merchant who, as we know from other Geniza records, lived in that town and was engaged in the manufacture of purple clothes; indeed, he was called "the purple-maker."[3]

Alexandria is not expressly mentioned in the account either, but since the camel load entered the city referred to through the Gate of the Sidriyya, or zizyphus tree ("Christ's thorn"), occasionally mentioned in our papers as the entrance by land to Alexandria, there remains no doubt as to the identity of the second intermediary station.[4]

As to the place of final destination, we find that the cost of transport from Alexandria to it was about four times as much as that paid from Old Cairo to Rosetta (see p. 343). Secondly, oil was sent back from there to Egypt. Thirdly, the merchant's agent "bought" there a large amount of gold pieces coined in Marrākesh, a town in Morocco (the English name for the country is derived from the name of that town). Finally—and this is the decisive detail—the agent changed a limited amount, namely, 2 gold pieces, into the currency of Sfax, the seaport of southern Tunisia, prominent in our records as a center for the export of oil. Thus we have all the reason to believe that the bale of "purple" under discussion was sent to Sfax and sold there.[5] The fact that our agent "bought," or exchanged, a part of the proceeds for Moroccan money does not refute this assumption, but, on the contrary, corroborates it. The account was written around 1100, for our "purple-maker" is known to have been active between 1080 and 1120 approximately. At that time, Tunisia was politically dismembered and economically ruined. The gold pieces of Morocco, which was then ruled by the powerful Almoravid dynasty, were so excellent that, under the name almoravidis, they were in circulation even throughout southern Europe. In other Geniza records, too, we find various merchants, including another representative of our purple-maker, acquiring almoravidis while doing business in Tunisia (cf. p. 236, above).

In Old Cairo, ʿArūs himself paid ¾ dinar for packing (hides, ropes, and service charge), three times as much as the fare from Old Cairo to Rosetta. In addition, he gave 5 dinars to his agent for "expenditure,"

that is, all expenses to be incurred for the bale, until it would reach the seagoing vessel (or, as we would say, f.o.b. Alexandria). The far greater expenses to be expected in Tunisia, including the main payment for the freight (see below), would be deducted from the price obtained there.

In order to understand the complicated account, one has to bear in mind that in all instances where no express mention is made of a gold dinar or a fraction thereof, silver dirhems are intended. One dinar in this document had the value of about 36.3 silver dirhems, a rate of exchange normal for that time.[6]

At the port of embarkation, the "arsenal" of Old Cairo, there were, besides the transport to the Nile and the porters, quite a number of items that call for comment. As in medieval Europe, customs or "dues" were paid in the Muslim countries not only at a frontier, but in every place where the government saw fit to have a customs station and not only for imports, but also for exports.[7] Thus, for our bale of purple, dues were payable three times within Egypt, at Old Cairo, at Rosetta, and at Alexandria. Moreover small sums were due for the seal on the consignment, for the official money changer, for the "mark on the patch" (obviously the mark of the merchants discussed above, p. 337), for two persons called by name, and for two other items, for which, thus far, no parallels have been found in other Geniza papers. The freight, which included the fare for the person accompanying it, as in the Italian shipping of that period, was normally paid after arrival, and therefore does not appear in the section dealing with the expenses incurred in Old Cairo. At embarkation, however, the sailors received a tip, as was customary in both sea and river traffic.

Upon arrival at Rosetta, first the freight and the "dues" had to be paid. In addition, there were smaller payments for "transit permit for one piece,"[8] for the use of the landing place, and for a registrar. In Rosetta, the bale was entrusted to a camel-driver, who was accompanied by an escort of three guards. On the way, a canal, or rather a part of the large lake of Edfu, was crossed by a ferry, requiring a fee. Again, the payment to the camel-driver is registered in the subsequent section, as it was made only after the arrival in Alexandria. On the other hand, the traveler had to provide bread for his four companions and had to pay the guards at the time he hired them. It is remarkable that such strong protection was needed on a highway between two cities so near to each other as Rosetta and Alexandria.[9]

While passing through the Sidriyya Gate of Alexandria, again "transit of one piece" had to be paid, and the gatekeepers and inspectors had to be remunerated. The transport of the bale to a storehouse, the rent of a place in its court, guarding it, two nights' lodging, and some other minor items are registered. The largest single sum paid in Alexandria was, of course, the customs impost, over three times as much as that paid in Old Cairo and appearing here under the heading

"to the officials of the *dīwān*" (literally: office; cf. French *douane*, customs house). The bale had to be repacked for sea transport, and in addition to the packer, specialist "fasteners," mentioned also in other papers, had to be paid and tipped, presumably for fixing the bale securely in the ship. In order to embark, one had to pass through a gate once again with the usual tipping of the gatekeepers and inspectors, and at the dock two other officials had to be remunerated for their services or for refraining from interference.

As we have seen, payments for transportation, whether by land or by water, were made after arrival. In sea transport, however, a part of the freight had to be paid in advance, wherefore "freight" on a seagoing vessel was called in the language of that time "advance."[10] For our bale of purple, 1 dinar was paid down in Alexandria and another 3 dinars and 1 qīrāṭ were remitted after arrival in Tunisia. The gratuity given to the sailors in Alexandria at the time of embarkation was astonishingly low: 2 silver dirhems, only twice as much as that given in Old Cairo for the short voyage on the Nile down to Rosetta. In some other documents, the gratuity or "bribe" given to the captain and the sailors was rather high.[11]

Altogether, forty-five payments for a great variety of services, and made to many different persons, were necessary for the transport of one bale of purple cloth from Old Cairo to the ship setting sail in Alexandria. It is the more remarkable that the actual expenses amounted to almost the exact amount estimated by the merchant before the dispatch: 118-½ against 120 qīrāṭs, or only 5 dinars (see above, p. 340), a difference of slightly more than 1 percent. This, taken together with similar statements, shows that the Mediterranean transport business of medieval times, complicated as it seems, nevertheless enjoyed a high degree of regularity and stability. It should be noted that the data derived here from a Geniza account are in complete accordance with the picture emanating from a Muslim literary source dealing with customs dues and commerce in this period.[12]

In Sfax, Tunisia, where our agent was apparently a foreigner, everything was done by the local representative of the merchants, who, it seems, had also traveled with him on the same boat. The bale was taken to his storage warehouse and weighed there. After a deduction of thirty pounds for the tare, and three and a half pounds given to the "sultan and the young men," (i.e., a government office and its employees), 440-½ pounds remained, which were sold for 264 dinars and 7 qīrāṭs of local currency, worth around 94 Egyptian dinars (see p. 202, above). The following deductions from the price obtained should be noted: commission or brokerage fee, most probably received by the representative of the merchants, 6 dinars, 15 qīrāṭs; sales tax, 7 dinars, 1 qīrāṭ; "for the young men and the sultan" (listed in this order), 1 dinar, 21 qīrāṭs (i.e., another government office); dues paid at the gate, 1 dinar, 8 qīrāṭs. There were other expenses, such as the transport

to the warehouse and from there to the inn or caravansary, and the renting of a storeroom (until the goods would be paid for and fetched).

One item in the list from Sfax remains enigmatic: "A present [or, perhaps, a lamb] instead of gold due to the custom." Since, in the continuation of the account (not discussed here), another consignment brought from Egypt by the local representative of the merchants is referred to, it is possible that our bale of purple cloth was registered as being imported by him and therefore exempt from import dues. In order to make things smoother, perhaps a present was given to the official concerned. The word translated here tentatively as "present" or "lamb" may simply be a mistake of the copyist, and the real meaning of that item remains obscure. In any case, ¼ dinar could not represent customs duties for goods worth a thousand times more.

Summarizing this detailed account, we learn that customs and other dues for the dispatch of one bale, worth 66-¼ dinars, from Old Cairo f.o.b. Alexandria, required around 3 dinars (or about 5 percent), and the transport approximately 1 dinar (or 1.5 percent). The freight from Alexandria to Tunisia, half the length of the Mediterranean sea, was a little over 4 dinars, or about 4 percent of the price of about 94 Egyptian dinars finally obtained, while the government dues connected with the sale amounted to about 4 percent.

With this account, rendered for a single bale, another, made for one of the largest shipments ever mentioned in the Geniza, might be compared. This is contained in a huge, but much damaged, document, written on vellum early in the eleventh century and referring to 133 bales of Egyptian flax sold in the West (Sicily or Tunisia). The total price was 1,497-⅝ dinars and 32,421 dirhems, at a time when the rate of exchange between gold and silver coins was around 1:39 (as is evident from many details in the account itself). The expenses for customs and transport were 161 dinars and 393-½ dirhems. Converting the dirhems into dinars, we find that proceeds amounted to about 2,318 dinars, and expenditure for customs and freight came to 171, a little over 7 percent, which tallies with the figures listed in the previous account.[13]

Naturally, the cost of both government dues and transport varied according to the type and weight of the commodities carried and according to the countries and, as we have seen, even the towns concerned. Nevertheless, the figures obtained from the two accounts discussed are fairly representative of the conditions prevailing during the eleventh and the first half of the twelfth centuries. A few examples illustrate these conditions.

In 1143, a consignment of silk, weighing 144-½ pounds and having an estimated value of 190-½ dinars, was charged in Alexandria with imposts totaling 8 dinars and 2-¼ qīrāṭs, or about 4 percent. The freight costs (presumably for the transport from Sicily or Tunisia) were 3-⅓ dinars, a little over 1-½ percent. One hundred and twenty years earlier, in 1024, a bale of textiles, worth about 600 rubāʿīs or

quarter dinars, sent from Tunisia to Egypt, cost 6-¾ rubā'īs freight, slightly more than 1 percent of its value. For a shipment of madder dye, which around 1100 brought a price of 5-½ dinars in Old Cairo, customs duties to the amount of ¼ dinar were defrayed in Alexandria —again about 5 percent.[14]

The freight for bulky goods, such as olive oil, wool, wax, or pitch, naturally constituted a far higher percentage of the price. At the end of the account for the bale of purple discussed above, mention is made of a shipment of olive oil (from Tunisia to Egypt) worth 22-¼ dinars and requiring 6-½ dinars for freight and customs. The same 'Arūs b. Joseph sending 5 qinṭārs of wool worth 30 dinars from Alexandria to Almeria, Spain, had to pay 6 dinars for freight, of which one-half was defrayed in Alexandria and the rest at the port of destination.[15] Forty years earlier, the shipping of 6 skins with olive oil and 5 with pitch from Sfax in Tunisia to near al-Mahdiyya and from there to Mazara in Sicily cost 8 dinars, but fetched a total price of only 168 quarter dinars or 42 dinars.[16] At the same time approximately, 10 earthen jugs with soap weighing 645 pounds and worth 13-$^{23}/_{24}$ dinars paid 3-$^{1}/_{16}$ dinars freight for the transport from Tunisia to Egypt.[17] A generation earlier, around 1030, 21 hundredweights of wax with a total value of 100–120 dinars required 15 dinars for the same way.[18]

All in all, it appears that in the period under discussion customs duties and costs of transport were not excessively high.

It is perhaps owing to this fact that we find in the Geniza papers very few remarks about attempts to cheat and to evade customs duties. Only in times and places where special charges were imposed, which were regarded as unjust, do such remarks become frequent. Thus in Sicily around 1060, when Muslim rule was nearing its end, and in Morocco a little later, a tithe incumbent on foreign, but not on local, merchants was imposed. To us this seems perfectly normal. At that time, however, such discriminatory treatment of foreigners was regarded as outrageous. The latter often pretended that their goods belonged to local merchants and mishaps are recorded as the consequence of such fraud. Finally, this particular customs duty on the goods of foreign merchants was abolished, at least in Sicily.[19]

Thus one gets the impression that with the exception of cases such as those just noted, the Muslim countries represented in the Geniza records formed a sort of customs union: customs were paid in many places, as we have seen, even inside the same country, but no distinction was made between local and foreign traders. Moreover, it seems that in the Fatimid period, the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the whole Mediterranean area comprised such a free-trade community. To be sure, Jews and Christians living in Muslim countries had to pay a poll tax and, while proceeding from one country to another, had to produce a certificate showing that they had fulfilled that obligation. Foreigners from a non-Muslim country had to pay a special toll while crossing

the frontier. It seems to be certain that the Muslim canonical law, which imposes a double customs duty on non-Muslim merchants, was not enforced during the Fatimid period, for if it were otherwise it is unthinkable that in the many hundreds of business letters written by Jews during that period allusion should never be made to its existence. Only at the time of the orthodox reaction under Saladin (1171–1193) was it enforced for a short period. Then an India trader on his way home is instructed by his brother in Alexandria to entrust his goods to a Muslim fellow traveler in order to save the additional customs dues incumbent on non-Muslims.[20] Saladin's edict was soon repealed by himself, as is reported in detail in another letter from Alexandria.[21]

On the other hand, it seems that the tolls for the transport of even small quantities of foodstuffs within a country annoyed the population and were often evaded. Here we read about professional smugglers, such as two Shāmīs (Syro-Palestinians), who were renowned for being successful in smuggling everything into the capital of Egypt from the little towns of the Egyptian countryside. Sometimes the dangerous task of smuggling into Old Cairo was left to slaves.[22] On Nile boats, a maximum weight for bales was prescribed, at least at a certain period. In a letter from Būṣīr to Fustat, the addressee is advised to bribe the official weigher, for the writer's bales of flax were overweight. But no such attempt should be made, if the customs authorities had already been informed of that fact. The writer seems to have had experience in such matters.[23]

Unpleasant surprises always have to be taken into account at a customs station. A boat on its way from Alexandria to Fustat moored, unexpectedly it seems, in al-Maqs, the port of (New) Cairo, and the tax-farmer of the port customs there "inspected" the goods, obviously intending to exact payments.[24] Great tribulation could be caused a merchant when the customs house was closed just at the time of most urgent business, as we read on page 201, above. The nonappearance of customs officials in time must have been a familiar nuisance. A commerical treaty between Florence and a Mamluk Sultan from the year 1489 devotes a full clause to it: after three days of delay the foreign merchants were permitted to pay the customary dues to the local governor and then to sell their goods.[25] When a traveler suddenly discovered that he did not have enough money to pay for the customs, he had to leave behind a part of his goods as security for later payment.[26]

The word "customs," *maks*, had a bad sound in Arabic, for according to Muslim religious conceptions, "customs" were illegal and sinful. (This word has some history behind it: it is derived from the same Aramaic root as the word used by Jesus when he spoke out against the "publicans"; and the proper place for publicans is Hell—in Islam as in Christendom and Judaism.) Therefore, the technical term "customs" was often replaced by innocent or general words, such as "dues"

or "payments." [27] The translation and discussion by Claude Cahen of a Muslim handbook on administration, dealing, *inter alia,* with the customs dues in the Mediterranean ports of Egypt has opened a new era in the study of this important aspect of medieval commerce. The widely dispersed, but rich and variegated Geniza material on the subject, once properly collected, will form a living commentary on this and other literary sources.[28]

## 12. ON TRAVEL IN GENERAL

"Shall I undertake this journey or not?" "Will it be successful?" "Will I come home safely?" The writers of the Geniza letters, like their Muslim contemporaries, tried to find answers to such questions by *istikhāra* (literally: entreating God to choose the best for them). One would never write, "I decided to make this trip," but rather, "I asked God to choose for me" (implying "and have received a favorable reply").[1]

The istikhāra could take different forms. One of the most popular was "looking into the Bible"—a form of divination common also in medieval Europe. Thus a woman from Egypt, living in "Romania" (a part of the Byzantine empire), who wanted to return to her home country, writes in a Hebrew letter: "I looked into the Torah scroll, which showed me that my luck was bad and that I would not be successful; therefore, I could not come together with the bearers of this letter." [2]

In order to ensure one's safe return, one might also resort to outright magical procedures before embarking on a journey, and as the texts telling us about them are written in scholarly hands, we can be sure that these practices were by no means confined to the lower strata of the society.[3] Such texts are rare, however, and, thus far, not a single reference to magical practices has been found in a *letter*. I take this as an indication that they were not very prominent in the minds of the travelers.

In the main, a traveler relied for his protection on the prayer of his relatives and friends—in particular, on that of his mother, another elderly woman, or a saintly person known to him. In a great many letters, the writers ask—while setting out on a journey or while abroad—to be included in the prayers of the addressee and of other persons specified. In some cases, such requests sound like an expression of reverence or even of mere politeness toward those referred to. Mostly, however, one feels that the writer lives in dread and sincerely relies on the efficacy of intercession by those loved or respected by him.

In addition to prayer, such intercession could also consist of fasting or other privations, which were regarded as sacrifices by the people remaining at home for the benefit of the members of the family who

were abroad. Thus a widow writing from Tunisia, although herself in great distress, owing to the invasion of the country by Italian pirates, informs her brother, who was in the East, that when she heard of his illness, she swore (*a*) not to take any food during daytime, (*b*) not to change her clothes, and (*c*) not to visit the public bathhouse, the popular place of amusement of those days. Similar declarations are made in other letters.[4]

Before setting out on a journey, one would also make preparations of a more practical nature. As far as business trips are concerned, we have already seen how vital letters of introduction were for anyone proceeding to a country with which he was little acquainted or altogether unfamiliar. For people traveling for other purposes, such letters were even more urgent, and quite a number of documents of this type have been preserved. First, such a letter would state the purpose of the bearer's journey, for when a person did not go abroad on business, the reason for his travel would not be self-evident. Secondly, it would explain why the bearer was in particular need of help, what kind of assistance was required, and why the receiver, more than anyone else, was *the* person to provide it. Thirdly, the letter would emphasize that the person recommended was really worthy of the addressee's attention. Finally, it gave assurance that any assistance given to the bearer would be regarded by the sender as if he himself had benefited by it. Sometimes such letters are worded rather strongly, ending with the formula: "I hope to receive from X [the man recommended] letters full of praise for you and specifying all that you have done for him." The smooth and stereotyped style of such letters seems to indicate that in the Middle Ages (just as in our own time) there must have been people to whom the writing of letters of recommendation was a favorite pastime.[5]

Another item much sought after by persons traveling to foreign countries or a hostile environment was a letter of safe-conduct. Thus we find a European traveler, who had experienced grave troubles in the Egyptian seaport Damietta, where he had been able to save himself from imprisonment only by paying heavy bribes, requesting such a letter from Abū Sa'd al-Tustarī.[6] Half a century later, another European, Isaac Benveniste of Narbonne, France, asks for a similar letter from al-Malik al-Afḍal, the viceroy of Egypt, again for passage through Damietta. The details mentioned in the request are of interest. The letter was to include permission to proceed to any country, whether Muslim or Christian, as well as strong warnings to captains and sailors not to molest the traveler.[7] We find even that a traveler from Old Cairo to Alexandria was concerned with his security within that turbulent Mediterranean port, and requested a letter to safeguard his person during his sojourn there.[8]

An indispensable part of the preparations for any journey was the choosing of a companion, *rafīq*. As a rule, one never traveled alone.

"The companion is more important than the route taken," says an often quoted Arabic proverb, implying that it was worth while changing the route in order to have the opportunity to travel together with someone pleasant, resourceful, and trustworthy. This institution of the individual fellow companion is to be distinguished from the practice of joint travel in a caravan or convoy. While the latter could roughly be compared to a group brought together during a conducted tour, we have nothing comparable to the institution of the rafīq, which was necessitated by the insecurity, discomfort, and length of medieval travel. The word appears mostly in the singular, which means that two persons were connected by special bonds, although, as a rule, more than two acquaintances traveled together. This connection had even legal consequences, so that when suspicion fell on a traveler, his companion would also be implicated.[9] The thirteenth-century Muslim writer Ibn Saʿīd takes it for granted that a traveler would be imprisoned, beaten, and tortured when his rafīq died because the local authorities would assume that the latter had left money with him.[10] In a report of a disaster at sea, when one was usually very exact, it was sufficient to state: Mr. X and his rafīq, Mr. Y and his rafīq, have perished, because the names of the travel companions would be known to the receiver of the letter.[11] In a carefully drawn up list of foreigners in receipt of loaves of bread from the community, a European Jew "and his fellow traveler" are noted.[12] Letting a friend or relative depart without a personal companion, even on a short trip, was regarded as a disgrace.[13] Among the wishes extended to a person on a journey was also the blessing: "May God grant you good companionship," which, however, had perhaps the same meaning as the farewell wish still used today in Persian, namely: "May God be your fellow traveler." [14]

Merchants traveling together in times of danger would sometimes form a loosely organized group, with one of them in command.[15] This, however, was not common. In a late, sixteenth-century document, we read that a caravan consisting of merchants from Aleppo could not leave Damascus, because they had not yet chosen a leader.[16] Losses incurred in throwing overboard, shipwreck, piracy, or war would be equally shared by those concerned. There was a special term for this "proportional participation in losses," used in the areas of both the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, which shows that the procedure was generally accepted. This equal distribution, however, did not comprise all those traveling in one caravan or a convoy, but only those traders who had formed a special syndicate of common business interests in general. It is unfortunate that the texts studied so far are not more specific about this interesting aspect of medieval travel.[17]

Whenever feasible, one left on the morning following the weekly day of rest or a holiday. This had practical reasons: People naturally wanted to spend their free time with their families and would also try to reach their destination before the following weekend. When we find

that many letters are dated either on the day before or the night or the day after a holiday, this also had its reason, at least partly, in the fact that companies of travelers to whom letters were entrusted used to depart immediately after the day of rest.[18] Although belief in propitious or ominous days (in particular: Tuesday, propitious, Wednesday, ominous) must have been widespread, as may be concluded from the evidence of Arabic and Hebrew literature and of present-day folklore, no traces of such belief—at least with regard to travel—have been found thus far in the Geniza.[19]

Travel normally required staying overnight away from home. Caravansaries, or inns, built in such a way as to provide space for both the traveler and his goods, met this need. Al-Qalqashandi, the great Egyptian antiquarian (d. 1418), states that public inns, or *funduqs* (the word is derived from Greek through Aramaic and passed later on to the Italians as *fondago,* today *fondaco*), were introduced only after the Fatimid period.[20] Since we hear in the Geniza about funduqs throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries, however, the learned antiquarian must have been thinking of the large compounds serving as caravansaries, erected as pious foundations by sultans, governors, and other great people. These were indeed characteristic for the thirteenth and later centuries, and at that time we also find such funduqs among the property of religious communities.[21]

As to the cost of lodging, we find expenses of 1-½ dirhems "for the funduq" and of 1 "for passing the night" in an account referring to the year 1045 and the town al-Mahdiyya. The former figure certainly refers to the payment for the storage of the traveler's consignment (a bale to which two packages were attached) and the latter to that charged for his lodging. Exactly the same differentiation is made in the account of around 1100 from Alexandria, discussed pp. 339 ff., above, and the rate for the storage was the same: 1-½ dirhems for one bale.[22]

Sometimes travelers had to stay in a funduq for a prolonged period. Thus in an unfortunately much-damaged letter from the very beginning of the eleventh century, the writer states that he would hate to remain in the Caravansary of the Raisins for a full month (tied down to the addressee's 58 bales), since his travel companion was spending the nights elsewhere.[23] We find letters in the Geniza addressed to inns, just as we might give a hotel as our temporary address. One, from the beginning of the thirteenth century, in Hebrew characters was sent to Old Cairo to the caravansarai of al-Maḥallī (family name derived from the town al-Maḥalla)—a well-known compound, large enough even to accommodate a mosque.[24] Another, at least one hundred and fifty years older, is even more interesting. Its address, in Arabic characters, reads as follows: "To Sūsa [a seaport in northern Tunisia], to the inn at the Msaken [25] gate, opposite the mosque." Such specification seems to indicate that even in a comparatively small town like

Sūsa there must have been several inns. It is also significant that the addressee, a prominent member of the well-known Tāhertī family, stayed in a caravansarai, although a number of his close relatives are known to have lived in Sūsa at that time. He likely did this because he had to look after the consignments mentioned in the letter.[26]

It is perhaps not surprising that a funduq was also a place where one could meet, or was suspected to have met, with a woman of bad reputation. The letter referring to such an incident is from Alexandria and speaks about "one of the caravansarais." [27] A later Muslim author defines the term prostitute by "a woman living in a funduq." And when in the newly discovered writings of a Judeo-Christian sect, Helena, the mother of emperor Constantine, is repeatedly described as a *funduqiyya*, the same meaning is intended.[28]

In smaller places at least, it seems, one booked in advance and paid even when the reserved accommodation was not used. At least, thus I understand the following sentence in a long, but incomplete, letter, speaking about a night's stay in Qalyūb, a little town near Old Cairo: "I paid him for two nights, saying to him that perhaps no one else would stop at his place." [29]

Needy travelers were accommodated in buildings provided by their religious communities. The rather strange incident concerning the synagogue of Caesarea, Palestine (mentioned p. 321, above) may serve as a case in point. This custom is discussed in the chapter on communal institutions.[30]

Distinguished visitors from overseas and better-class merchants would seek more comfortable quarters than a noisy caravansarai. Wealthy traders possessed houses in the different countries they frequented or would exchange hospitality with relatives and intimate business friends. Otherwise, it seems, people were reluctant to accept invitations for a prolonged stay with acquaintances. One preferred renting a house or an apartment for the duration of one's stay in a foreign town. Only over the Sabbaths and holidays would one accept the invitations of distinguished hosts. The social duties of a visitor from abroad were many, and one tried not to oblige oneself too heavily.[31]

While moving from one locality or country to another, different methods were in vogue. A merchant emigrating from southern Tunisia to Sicily—quite a distance—first bought a house in the new place and then went back to fetch his family, even though in this case it was late in the year and a war was going on in that part of the Mediterranean.[32] Conversely, a scholar intending to leave the Egyptian countryside for Old Cairo asked a friend to rent him a place for two months, during which he would look for a permanent domicile.[33] In one case we read that a man emigrating overseas took with him furniture, bedding, clothing, ledgers, books, documents, and one illegible item. The details

are mentioned, as may be expected, because everything was lost at sea.[34]

A serious aspect of medieval travel was its long duration and consequently the protracted absence of the traveler from his home. Periods of 4, 5, and 8 years are mentioned, as far as the Mediterranean area is concerned, and Miriam, the sister of Moses Maimonides, in a letter to her illustrious brother, complains that her son had traveled away and completely disappeared "as if he had fallen into a well."[35] How to provide financially for his family, how to ensure that household and business would be conducted properly during his absence, how to soothe the anxiety and impatience of his wife, how to overcome his own yearning and homesickness, how to manage that his sons would get a proper education and his daughters' husbands—all these were problems that incessantly vexed a father on a journey. We hear their echo in many letters, as well as in court records and other legal documents. We shall meet with their implications and complications in the subsequent volumes of this book.

A minor tribulation for the traveler, not unfamiliar to ourselves, was the obligation to bring home presents for every member of the household. As we have seen, even the maidservant, although legally a slave, was by no means to be forgotten.[36] A sister admonishes her brother abroad to bring appropriate presents for his two little girls "and their mother" (i.e., his wife), lest the addressee, known from other letters as a very much occupied and difficult person, forget his duty.[37] The traveler's mother required particular attention.[38]

Upon arrival, the travelers had to undergo a number of formalities, such as the scrutiny of their papers (e.g., in case of non-Muslims, whether they had paid their poll tax). Therefore, we occasionally read that the newcomers did not disembark immediately after arrival. Thus passengers, arriving from Sicily in Alexandria on Friday, August 9, 1062, could not leave the boat until Sunday. A traveler from Spain, arriving at the same port on Sunday morning, September 8, 1140, was still on board on the evening of the same day, while a local passenger had already landed. So far nothing has been found about a medical examination of incoming passengers in a Mediterranean port, such as was usual in Aden with regard to ships coming from India.[39]

Coming home from an extensive voyage was an occasion for a great family celebration. Relatives and friends would come from near and far to express their "congratulations"—the same term was used as on the occasion of a wedding or a high holiday. When a friend was unable to come in person, or when a large company of business friends arrived on the same boat so that it was cumbersome to attend congratulation ceremonies for each of them or even to write to each of them individually, adequate excuses were made, which we now read in the Geniza letters. The Hebrew benediction to be said when seeing a

friend after a long period of separation was: "Blessed be He who resurrects the dead." [40]

In biblical times, a traveler, after having safely returned from a voyage by sea, would present an oblation of thanksgiving in the Temple of Jerusalem. Later, this offering was replaced by alms given to the poor. Collections were made among travelers after their arrival in a port.[41] After returning home "safe in souls and goods," they would receive letters from needy persons congratulating them and, at the same time, alluding discreetly to the writers' own tribulations, such as imprisonment because of the inability to pay the poll tax, tribulations that could be alleviated or removed by an appropriate gift.[42]

The last trial for a Jewish traveler coming home was the ceremony of public thanksgiving in the synagogue, and there were certainly similar functions in the churches and mosques. The custom goes back to Psalm 107:23–32, verses that re-create such a ceremony in immortal words, familiar to every reader of the Bible. Jewish ritual regulated the ceremony and made it comparatively simple: the traveler, when called up to read a portion from the weekly section of the Bible, would add: "Blessed be He who bestows bounties on sinners. He has favored me with His bounties." Medieval taste for pomp was not satisfied with this, but required the addition of appropriate quotations. This is where some travelers, after having braved all the vicissitudes of their journey, got into trouble. This is exemplified in a little strip of paper, bearing the following entreaty: "My father has come back from his voyage and is bound to be called up to recite the benediction 'Blessed be He who bestows bounties on sinners.' He kisses your hands and asks you kindly to select for him some appropriate Bible quotations for the occasion." [43]

To have traveled widely was a title of pride. No wonder that some ambitious person tried to usurp that title without having deserved it. The Geniza contains a note addressed to Maimonides asking the somewhat quaint question what to do with a man who ascended the reader's platform of a synagogue and pronounced the benediction of thanksgiving for safe return from travel by sea, but had not traveled at all. The master's answer to this query, if given at all, has not been preserved.[44]

# APPENDIXES

# *Appendix A*

# DATES AND NAMES

## I. DATES

This and the next appendix do not present the voluminous Geniza material on dates, names, coins and weights, but are intended to familiarize the reader with the most common terms and relevant facts and the problems involved in them.

Several systems of dating, Muslim, Jewish, and Christian (Coptic), existed side by side and sometimes were applied simultaneously in the same document. The Jews mostly used their own, but often, especially in accounts and legal documents, made mention also of Muslim months and years. The Coptic calender rarely appeared (except in references to seafaring); it was used, for instance, when a happy father notes the exact date of the birth of a son according to all the various calendars in vogue in the three religious communities.

The standard work on the Jewish calendar is *Handbuch der jüdischen Chronologie* by Eduard Mahler (Leipzig, 1916), cited hereafter as *Mahler.* Edgar Frank, *Talmudic and Rabbinical Chronology* (New York, 1956) also has some bearing on the topics treated here. For books on Muslim chronology see Sauvaget-Cahen, pp. 80–81. The standard work is *Wüstenfeld-Mahler'sche Vergleichungstabellen* . . . , new edition by B. Spuler (Wiesbaden, 1961), cited as *Wüstenfeld-Mahler.*

The era most commonly used by the Jews of the Geniza period was the "Era of the Documents," also called "Era of the Greeks," and by other names, and often simply "the era according to which we count here." Scientifically, it is known as the Seleucid era. It began in fall, 312 B.C.

Slightly less used was the era still in vogue in the Synagogue today, called "Era of the Creation," which starts with the year 3760 B.C. Thus, the year 1000 of the Christian era is 1311, Era of the Documents, and 4760, Era of the Creation.

Since the Jewish year begins in the fall (mostly in September), it never coincides with the Christian, which begins on January 1. Therefore, while converting Jewish into Christian dates, one must always pay attention to the month and day. Thus, 1967 corresponds to 5727 of the Creation. But the first three months and fourteen days of 5727 still fell in 1966. The slight discrepancies often found between dates provided in this book and those given in catalogues or editions of Geniza documents owe mostly to the fact that some previous authors disregarded this annoying difference (for reasons of convenience or expediency, of course, not out of ignorance). In the many

cases in which only the year, but not the months and days, is indicated or preserved in a document, the Jewish year has to be rendered by two Christian years, for instance, 5727 = 1966-1967.

The Jewish and Muslim months are lunar, which means that they comprise the time between one new moon and the other, a period of approximately 29-½ days. Therefore, both the Muslim and the Jewish years have 6 months of 29 days and another 6 of 30 days. Since the Christian months are not geared to the phases of the moon, they normally never coincide with the Jewish and Muslim ones, and again, where the day is not indicated or preserved, a Jewish or Muslim month must be identified by two Christian ones. Thus, the Jewish month of Nisan, 5727, corresponding exactly to the Muslim month of Muḥarram, 1387, must be defined by April–May, 1967 (its actual duration: April 11–May 10).

In 1967, the correspondence of the Jewish and Muslim months is exact. During the Geniza period, there often were discrepancies of one or two days, and sometimes such discrepancies are expressly stated in a letter. Since the Muslim calendar was fixed according to the actual observation of the moon, while the Jewish calendar was astronomically fixed, such differences are not surprising (but they exist also between *Mahler* and *Wüstenfeld-Mahler*, as far as the Geniza period is concerned, as well as between *Wüstenfeld-Mahler* and data provided in Geniza documents or Arabic literature. More serious is the problem that in some cases a date in a Geniza document, mentioned together with the day of the week, differs from that calculated in *Mahler*. Such baffling disagreements must be left to professional students of chronology. They are touched on here only where they have relevance to the subject matter discussed, as on page 289.

The total of twelve lunar months is more than eleven days shorter than a solar year. Since nature depends on the sun, the Jewish calendar adapts the lunar to the solar year by adding a thirteenth month seven times in nineteen years, a process called intercalation. Therefore, many a Geniza document defines a year as a period consisting of twelve months, namely when a contract is made in or before such a "leap year" of thirteen months.

The Muslim year, designated by the abbreviation A.H., has no intercalation and therefore has no relation to nature whatsoever. Since the Muslim states derived their revenue mainly from agriculture, they were forced to adopt, in addition to the Muslim calendar, "financial" calendars of various origins. The rents for houses and shops and the accounts of the merchants, however, were all made according to the Muslim calendar. We are therefore not surprised that the "financial year" has left no traces in the Geniza (cf. pp. 208 and 269, above). The Muslim year, like the Jewish, never coincides with the Christian and must be rendered by two Christian years wherever month and day are not indicated. For instance, A.H. 1387 = 1967-1968.

All dates in this book, including the Coptic ones, are given according to the present-day, so-called Gregorian, calendar, which was instituted in 1582, centuries after the Geniza period. The dates found in the documents or derived from them by circumstantial evidence are converted everywhere into modern ("Gregorian") dates with the aid of *Mahler* or *Wüstenfeld-Mahler*. In light of the explanations given above, one must allow for a margin of slight differences.

The Jewish, Muslim, and Oriental (also in general: ecclesiastic) Christian day begins on the preceding evening. "The night of Saturday" means Friday

night. Consequently, the Sabbath and all holidays start on the evening of the preceding days.

## II. NAMES

A person could be identified in many different ways, often used side by side in the same document.

1. His personal name. If he was Jewish this could be either Hebrew or Arabic or both. In the last case, the meaning of the two names was, or was supposed to be, the same and since the two languages are cognate, often also the sound was similar: for example, Obadiah-ʿAbdallāh, "Servant of God," Nethanel–Hibat Allāh, "Gift of God," Japheth-Ḥasan, "Handsome" (in reality the Hebrew Japheth does not have this meaning). Arabic names were hebraized: Barakāt-Berākhōt, "Blessings," Yaḥyā-Yiḥyē, "May he live." The biblical name Eli, never used by Jews before Islam (because Eli, the High Priest, was an ill-fated man [I Samuel 2:30–36]), is the most common name in the Geniza, because its spelling is identical with the Arabic ʿAlī.

2. A man's personal name followed by that of his father: for example, Nahray ben (abbreviated here as b.) Nissīm.

3. The so-called *kunya*, a name composed with Abū (later often shortened to Bū) *, originally meaning "father of," is mostly used to mean "possessor of," "endowed with." Often, but not always, there exists some connection between the kunya and the name: for instance, the Hebrew Yeshūʿā (p. 364, below), means "Salvation," and the Arabic kunya attached to it, Abu 'l-Faraj, "endowed with salvation." ʿArūs (p. 194, above), is Arabic for "bridegroom," the kunya Abu 'l-Afrāḥ means "endowed with happiness." A man called Abraham would be called Abū Isḥāq, "Father of Isaac" (p. 258, above), even if he had no child at all, because the biblical patriarch had a son of that name.

In ancient Arabic speech a person was addressed not by his name, but by his kunya. Conversely, he would mention himself not by his kunya, but by his name. In the Geniza period this usage was still alive, but not strictly adhered to. Thus, the India trader Abū Zikrī Kohen signed all his documents in this way, while he was occasionally addressed by his personal name Judah (p. 242, above).

Persons are very often referred to solely by their kunya. This makes their identification sometimes a hazardous task (see the remark about Abu 'l-Faraj, (p. 309, above).

4. A Jew belonging to the priestly family of Aaron was called ha-Kohen, "the priest," often abbreviated to Kohen (without the Hebrew article *ha*). The tribal surname ha-Levi was rarely shortened in this way, presumably because Levi was also a personal name.

5. Family names, whether or not introduced by *Ibn*, "son of," were very common, but not general. As with our own family names, their origin was variegated and derived from (*a*) the names of ancestors, in particular of one who bore a title or a nickname, such as the Scholar (p. 238, above). Miska, "the woman surnamed a piece of musk" (p. 365, below); (*b*) places, for example, (al-) Ḥalabī, from Aleppo; (*c*) professions, see, for instance, page 80, above.

* The *u* in the combinations *Abu'l, Bu'l* becomes short and is therefore printed without a bar.

6. Honorary epithets conferred by rulers, the heads of the Jewish academies or local communities (as a reward for generous donations). Many persons accumulated quite a number of such epithets, as one does today with honorary degrees, but one of them often became the sole name by which a person normally was referred to, such as Sanā' al-Mulk, "the Splendor of the Realm" (p. 253, above). Since the same honorary epithet was given at different times and places to different persons, the student of the Geniza incurs here the same difficulty as in the identification of kunyas noted earlier.

7. Sobriquets of all descriptions, mostly humoristic, were common and also often became the single name by which a person was known. In legal documents, where strict identification was necessary, sometimes the most derogatory nicknames are unabashedly listed. Such data are helpful, but also must be used with discretion, since, as we have noted, a sobriquet could become a family name and thus designate a person different from the one defined in a dated document.

8. Taste and usage with regard to names changed considerably during the three hundred years or so of the "classical" Geniza period. In view of this, the names occurring in an otherwise undatable document sometimes can be used to approximate its period.

# *Appendix B*

## COINS, WEIGHTS, AND MEASURES

### I. COINS

1. The Muslim gold coin *dīnār* continued the Roman-Byzantine monetary system both in its name, which goes back to Latin *denarius*, and in its weight. Its standard weight was 4.233 grams, and, as is proved by the hundreds of pieces preserved, this weight was essentially maintained and the gold content of the coins was excellent during most of the Fatimid period.

2. In view of the enormous difference between our way of life and standards of living and those of the Geniza people it is extremely difficult to gauge the purchasing power of a dinar. Several direct and indirect testimonies of the Geniza prove that 2 dinars were regarded as a monthly income sufficient for a lower middle class family. For the sake of illustration, it seems therefore permissible to equate the economic value of a dinar with that of approximately a hundred U.S.A. dollars. More about this in *Mediterranean Society*, Volume IV, chapter ix.

3. In general, dinars struck in different cities under the various Fatimid caliphs did not differ much in weight or alloy. Nor was there a perceptible difference between coins the legends of which were arranged in concentric circles and those that bore inscriptions in parallel lines. As the accounts of the bankers and a great many allusions in letters prove, however; each group of dinars had a separate rate of exchange (which kept the money changers in business). Cf. above, pages 236–240.

4. In Sicily and Tunisia mostly quarter dinars, weighing approximately 1 gram, were struck. The tari of the Norman conquerors of southern Italy and Sicily was of the same type (see p. 237, above).

5. The other fractions of a dinar, continuously mentioned in letters and accounts, such as ½, ⅓, ⅙, ⅛, as a rule, were not coins, but mostly represented money of account.

6. The dinar was divided into 24 carats (qīrāṭ: the English is derived from the Arabic, which itself goes back to the Greek). The qīrāṭ, too, was money of account. For the exceptional case where it appears as a coin, an explanation is tried in S. D. Goitein, "Bankers Accounts from the Eleventh Century," *JESHO*, 9 (1967), 53.

7. The qīrāṭ was subdivided into three ḥabbas, or grains, and six dānaqs. In different areas and periods these subdivisions had varying values; those indicated here are the ones found in the Geniza documents. The 1/24, 1/72, and 1/144 dinars mentioned in this book refer to qīrāṭs, ḥabbas, and dānaqs, respectively.

8. The term mithqāl (derived from the same Semitic root as biblical *shekel* and *tekel*) originally denotes the dinar as being of full weight. In the Geniza texts it is either synonymous with dinar or designates specific issues, mithqāl as a term being preferred in particular in Spain and Morocco.

9. The name for the silver coin, dirhem (as English *dram* going back ultimately to Greek *drachme*) was applied in three entirely different meanings:

(*a*) A full silver coin, called also *fiḍḍa*, silver, or *nuqra*, pure silver. Nominally, 13-⅓ dirhems of this type equaled 1 dinar.

(*b*) A coin of low silver content. Approximately 3 of them had the value of the nuqra and 36–40 that of the dinar. This coin is the dirhem normally referred to in the Geniza documents.

(*c*) Base local emissions of varying standards.

For details see Appendix D, below.

10. Fractions of the dirhem are constantly referred to. The *kharrūba*, or carob seed (the English is derived from the Semitic word) represented 1/16 of the dirhem, as in TS 16.39, l. 20. Normally, kharrūba is used (as we do with penny) in the sense of a very small amount of money (usually which one does not have); ḥabba, above, section 7, is used in the same sense.

11. Copper coins appear only in late Geniza texts and can be disregarded here. In view of this fact and the relative scarcity of silver coins found one wonders how people did their daily shopping. Glass weights of coins and other token money might have served as partial substitutes. More is said about this question in *Mediterranean Society*, Volume III, chapter viii.

## II. WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

1. Weights differed from place to place and from one commodity to another. To compound the confusion, as the Geniza texts show, one and the same commodity sometimes was traded in weights of different types.

2. The basic weight was the dirhem (not to be confused with the coin bearing the same name) weighing 3.125 grams. The common pound of Fustat, *raṭl*, consisted of 144 dirhems (or 12 ounces, *ūqiya*, of 12 dirhems), approximately 450 grams, comparable to the present day U.S.A. pound, and this coincidence is not fortuitous.

3. One hundred pounds made a qinṭār (ultimately going back to the same Latin word for a hundred as our *cent*).

4. Of the many local variations (many of which continued to exist right into the twentieth century) attention must be drawn to the pound of Damascus, which consisted of 600, and that of Jerusalem, which weighed 800 dirhems.

5. A weight much used in international trade was the *mann* (connected with the biblical *mene* [Daniel 5:25]), consisting of 2 pounds slightly lighter than the pound of Fustat. Nominally, this was the pound of Baghdad, comprising only 130 grams. Where Geniza texts permit us to check the discrepancy between 2 Egyptian pounds and the mann, we find the difference somewhat smaller than warranted by the nominal values. In two complementary documents from March, 1058, 139 raṭl in TS 20.152, l. 10, correspond to 74 mann in TS 12.5, l. 9.

6. Besides local variations of the pound (and, of course, the qinṭār), there were those bearing the name of commodities, such as the pepper pound, the silk pound (not in Hinz, *Masse*), oil pound (neither in Hinz, nor in Grohmann, *Einführung*), or pounds named after persons, such as the very common Laythī, called after a former governor of Egypt, and pounds described simply as the large and the small (the latter, *laṭīf*, not in Hinz or Grohmann). With a few exceptions (such as those just indicated), the weights of the various types of pounds and qinṭārs, mentioned in the Geniza documents, that is, the number of dirhems contained in each of them, were noted by Muslim antiquarians and are listed in the modern books of Islamic metrology.

7. When various quantities of one and the same commodity, such as indigo, were weighed, according to the same document, in different types of weight (pepper, large, and Laythī), perhaps several qualities of that commodity were involved. Or may we assume that the sellers simply weighed with the weights they happened to possess? An example in TS 12.284+.

8. In 90 percent of the cases, at least, the pound or qinṭār referred to is not defined. Whether or not under such circumstances the standard pound of *ca.* 450 grams or another one related to the commodity mentioned is intended, is a question to which the future student of economic history will have to pay attention.

9. Concerning camel loads and ship bales see pages 335 ff., above.

10. Grain was not weighed, but measured. The *wayba* comprised about 15 liters (approximately 4 gallons) and the *irdabb* consisted of 6 waybas. There is no need to treat here the many measures for oil and wine mentioned in the Geniza documents.

# *Appendix C*

## INDUSTRIAL PARTNERSHIPS

*(See chap. ii, sec. 2, pp. 87–89.)*
*Unless indicated otherwise, all documents were written in Fustat.*

1. TS 13 J 1, f. 3. September 15, 1016. (Heb.) Dyeing.

'Ammār b. Joseph, the dyer, releases his partner Samuel ha-Kohen b. Moses b. Ṣemaḥ of all obligations resulting from their terminated partnership and also declares not to have any claims on the sums still due the partnership in Malīj (six debtors are mentioned by name). The lengthy document was written on the eve of the Day of Atonement certainly because people from Malīj, where the workshop was operated, had come to Fustat for the High Holiday and were able to witness the release. The document is signed by nine witnesses (not six, as in Mann, I, 38 n. 1).

2. Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 32. November 30, 1076. Minting.

Manṣūr b. Khalaf of Tyre (Lebanon) undertakes to work for a full year in partnership with Japheth b. Abraham and Solomon b. Abraham (not relatives). He will receive half the profit and the two others the other half; he promises not to interrupt his work by travel and to pay 20 dinars even for the mere request of being permitted to travel in order to see his children and wife.

The first page of the contract where the nature of the work concerned was indicated has not been preserved, but in another document, TS 16.148, dated 1086, Manṣūr sifts gold dust for Japheth b. Abraham, who appears there as *mutawallī 'dār al-ḍarb,* administrator of the mint. Thus it is likely that the work here also was connected with minting, the two partners providing the materials, or standing security to the government for Manṣūr, while the latter provided the labor.

The document will be published by A. Udovitch.

3. TS 28.6, sec. B (upside down). June, 1079. Weaving.

Lengthy but incomplete draft in which Abraham Kohen b. Daniel releases his former partner Obadiah, called also 'Abdallāh, b. Meshullām of Tyre, from all obligations resulting from their partnership, promises to pay a sum still owed by them, and permits him in future to trade, to work in weaving, and to conclude partnerships with others.

4. TS 12.606. Around 1085. Lead workshop.

End of a deathbed declaration of one of three partners in a lead workshop. The lead, as well as three other materials specified as belonging to the partners in common, and the sums due them, were listed by the dying man in

his account book. Each owed one-third of the working implements. One asset was shared by the testator and the partner, Abu 'l-Khayr, to the exclusion of the third partner who happened to be the testator's brother, another again was shared differently. Abu 'l-Khayr is also appointed as executor of the will.

The date of the document is not preserved. It is in the handwriting of Hillel b. Eli (dated documents 1066-1107) and signed by the judge Abraham, son of Isaac, the Scholar (1050–1093). Hillel's handwriting changed slightly during the years. Our document belongs to his middle period.

5. TS 20.110 *. August-September, 1086. Weaving.

Nethanel, also called Hibat Allah, of Jerusalem, b. Yeshū'ā, a weaver, concludes a partnership with Ṣedāqā, Member of the Academy, b. Muvḥār for an unlimited period of time. Nethanel contributes 15 dinars, Ṣedāqā 50; profit and loss will be borne in equal shares. Nethanel will sell the fabrics woven by him solely in the exchanges of the clothiers. If he wishes to terminate the partnership, he has to announce this two months in advance and to pay back the capital invested with him in cash.

6. TS 10 J 27, f. 3, sec. 3 *. July 17, 1107. Cairo. Tailoring (Embroidery).

Eli b. Mevassēr pays 1 dinar and Nethanel b. Tiqvā 10 dinars and will add more as soon as the shop "turns." Eli will do the tailoring (which consisted largely in embroidery) and both will sell clothing. Eli's share in profit and loss: one-third. The keys are with his partner.

7. ENA 4011, f. 57. June-July, 1125. Bakery.

Draft, or rather instruction, written by the judge Nathan ha-Kohen b. Solomon (dated documents 1122-1150), concerning a partnership in a bakery, in which Hiba and Mūsā b. Bishr invested work in equal shares while the capital, 4 dinars, was provided by Abu 'l-Riḍā, the *shōmēr* (Heb.), or supervisor of ritual purity. When the bakery went bankrupt, Mūsā consented to pay 3 dinars and Hiba 1. According to TS K 15, f. 5, 600 loaves of bread, weighing 600 pounds, cost 3 dinars.

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8. Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 7. September-October, 1125. Glasswork.

Shemarya ha-Kohen b. Manasse, known as Abu 'l-Wafā b. al-Nāqid, releases Abu 'l-Munā Isaac b. Judah of Damascus and his son Abu 'l-Karam from all obligations resulting from a partnership in the manufacturing of glass vessels, which was done in a store of copperware in the Street of the Coppersmiths belonging to Shemarya. The release was granted, after Isaac paid 1 dinar out of 9-⅙ demanded by Shemarya. The intervening elders obviously were convinced that the Damascene glassmaker was unable to pay more.

9. Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 8 *. December 3, 1134. Glasswork.

Abū Sahl Manasse b. Eli ha-Levi, after having received a loan of 10 dinars from Nethanel b. Joseph, known as Abū Sa'd the Glassmaker, against which he deposits with him the title deeds of his house, concludes with him a partnership in the manufacture of glass vessels, for a period of six-and-a-half months. The capital, 20 dinars, is exclusively provided by Nethanel, who will work only two days a week, while Manasse will provide the rest of the skilled labor. All expenses, such as material, fuel and the payment of a journeyman, will be borne by the partnership. Whenever one of the partners takes out money for his private needs, the same sum will be withdrawn by the other partner. After the lapse of six-and-a-half months, Manasse has

first to return the 10 dinars lent to him. In case no profit is made, the loan has to be returned during the course of one year, failing which, Nethanel will indemnify himself from Manasse's house.

The deed was signed only four-and-a-half months after it was written, that is, only two months before the partnership was due to expire. Most probably, the rabbinical court had doubts whether the contract did not contain an element of "usury," or taking interest.

See also next item.

10. TS 10 J 9, f. 30. August, 1136. Wine-making.

The upper, lower, and left parts of the document have been torn away. From the text preserved these facts emerge: Four partners joined in the production of wine with the enormous sum of 1,510 dinars, of which Nethanel, known as Abū Sa'd the Glassmaker, contributed 400. Another partner, Ṣedāqā b. Bunān, pays 100; the name of the main capitalist and the sum contributed by him are not fully preserved, but I suspect that he paid 1,000 dinars while the manager, Yeshū'ā b. Japheth, known as Abu 'l-Faraj b. Abu 'l-Ḥusayn, participated only with the token sum of 10 dinars. The manager received one-third of the profit, the investors two-thirds. Only the manager was responsible to the farmers of the tax on wine production (cf. above, p. 270). Receipts from the government treasury testifying to the payment of the tax were produced by him. He was obliged also not to engage in any trade of wine outside the partnership. The document is a release in which all partners express their satisfaction with having received all due to them. A sum of "540 dinars, including the taxes," mentioned on the reverse side, 1. 2, seems to represent the income after the return of the capital invested.

11. Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 63, left upper corner*. June 30, 1139. Pharmacy.

Note in the handwriting of judge Nathan b. Samuel (dated documents 1122-1153) containing the gist of a contract in which the pharmacist, Sayyid al-Ahl b. Hiba, takes as partner Faraḥ b. Abu 'l-'Alā. The inventory of the pharmacy was worth 7 dinars, Faraḥ contributed 20 dinars, of which he paid 16 immediately, promising the rest for later. Sayyid al-Ahl reserved for himself the right to sell on his own account a popular medicine making women stout (the desired ideal of female beauty), *qirṭās al-taḥyīj*, modern *taḥawīg*,* although the material for this medicine would be taken from the common stock. This was his compensation as manager of the store. He also would dispense tooth powder, eye powder, and arsenic on his own account, the materials of which, however, he was obliged to buy himself. Each partner was allowed a *per diem* of 1-½ dirhems. Duration: one year.

12. TS 13 J 3, f. 5. Fall, 1143. Dyeing and making of purple cloth.

Joseph b. Ḥassān al-Mahdawī (from al-Mahdiyya) and Khalaf b. Abu 'l-Ḥasan al-Damsīsī (from Damsīs in Lower Egypt) traveled to Upper Egypt *fī ṣabgh al-arjawān wa-'amalih*, for dyeing and manufacturing purple cloth. After their return to Fustat and the dissolution of the partnership, long disputes arose between them. These were finally settled, and our document deals with a debt of 2 dinars remaining on one partner to the other. He undertook to pay 1 dinar in each of the months following the settlement under penalty of paying to the community the equivalent of any sum he might fail to pay. On the reverse side, three installments of 24, 8-½, and 9-½ dirhems are entered without date, and only in summer, 1144, eight months after the settlement,

* I learned this detail from Professor Muhammad El-Garh of Cairo University.

was the debt finally paid. Written in the difficult hand of Nathan b. Samuel (see preceding item), who wrote also the entry about the final payment, but had it signed by three other judges. This shows perhaps that the purple-dyers were rather tough people. Introducing the settlement, he writes indeed: after litigations, which to report would take too much time.

13. TS 10 J 7, f. 6*b*, sec. 3. September, 1159. Carpetweaving?

Hasty note in the hand of the judge Mevōrākh, son of Nathan b. Samuel (see preceding items; dated documents 1150-1181), written in perpendicular lines in the left lower corner of a page containing two court records signed by two other judges. Khalaf b. Samuel and Barakāt b. Mūsā Ibn Miska conclude a partnership, each contributing 3 dinars, while the implements, costing 1-⅓ dinars, also would be bought on account of the partnership. Profit (and losses) to be borne in equal shares. One year. Place: "In the qaysāriyya in the al-māṭ house." Al-māṭ probably is popular pronunciation of al-(an)māṭ, carpets.

14. TS 13 J 3, f. 15. August, 1171. Melting (of gold and silver).

Shelah, known as Faḍā'il, the Melter, and Berākhōt b. Elazar, known as Barakāt, the Melter, son of Abū Naṣr, the mūrid or purveyor (of precious metal to the caliphal mint) dissolve their partnership and release each other from all obligations. "Under the authority of our lord Moses [Maimonides], the great master in Israel."

15. Maimonides, *Responsa*, I, 128. 1165-1204. Work in the mint.

Two workers in the caliphal mint formed a partnership, the senior partner receiving three-quarters of the profit and making also the accounts for the two. When he paid his junior partner without rendering account, Maimonides decided that he was obliged to do so and had to give an oath in case he did not remember the details.

16. Maimonides, *Responsa*, I, 177–178. Silkwork.

About the "trust" of silk-workers of al-Maḥalla and Fustat, see page 88, above.

17. Maimonides, *Responsa*, II, 360. Silversmithing or glasswork.

Jewish and Muslim craftsmen (silversmithing or glasswork) formed a partnership, their implements being common property, on condition that profits made on Fridays belonged to the Jews and those made on Saturday accrued to the Muslims. The query inquires whether this was permissible since the implements in which the Jews had half a share were thus put to work on Saturday. The answer was in the affirmative. The question seems to assume that these Muslims did not work on their weekly day of worship. Friday, of course, is not a day of rest for Muslims (cf. Goitein, *Studies*, pp. 111–125). Questions about partnerships between Jews and Muslims are found in responsa directed to other rabbinical authorities (cf. the notes to the Maimonides text quoted).

18. Mosseri A 11*. April 13, 1215. (Heb.) ed. Assaf, *Texts*, p. 172. Dyeing.

A dyer, going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, appoints his partner as sole executor. The capital of the partnership amounted to 150 dinars.

19. JTS, Geniza Misc. 18*. October, 1217. Glasswork.

Incomplete draft. Munajjā invested 199 dinars, Hiba al-Zakī 6 dinars and 10 qinṭārs of glass; 108 qinṭārs of red glass and 105 of locally manufactured glass were bought for the money invested by Munajjā. Both would work, but Munajjā, as the investor, was in control of the common property. Duration: one year.

20. TS Box K 25, f. 153*. No date preserved. Indigo-dyeing in Damietta.
The upper part of the document with the date and the names of the parties has not been preserved. The handwriting is commonplace and may belong to the second half of the twelfth century or the first half of the thirteenth. The text is a copy, made for one of the partners, not an original, and is therefore unsigned. A group of indigo-dyers travel, presumably from Fustat, to the seaport Damietta to open there a dyeing shop with the capital provided by an investor who granted them astonishingly good conditions (cf. p. 88, above).

21. TS 10 J 14, f. 4. Around 1220. Silversmithing.
Ibrahīm b. Bu 'l-Faḍl and Bu 'l-Ḥasan b. Bu 'l-ʿAlā appeared in court, the former produced 3-½ dinars, the latter 1-½, these sums were mixed, Bu 'l-Ḥasan promised to complete the 3-½ dinars due from him and both formed a partnership in the work and sale of silversmithing (*wa-yaʿmalū ṣināʿat al-ṣiyāgha wa-yabīʿū*). Profit and loss to be shared equally. No time limit. The note is written on the reverse side of a letter addressed to the judge Elijah b. Zachariah by his son-in-law Abū Naṣr Elazar b. Abraham b. Elisha, in which greetings are extended to several religious dignitaries, one of whom, Abraham the Pious, died early in spring, 1223.
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22. Abraham Maimuni, *Responsa*, pp. 201–202. Around 1225. Silk-dyeing.
Five partners had invested their capital and work in a store for the dyeing and selling of silk (*dukkān ṣabgh wa-ḥarīr*) for several years. Once, when the cooperative needed a sum of 15 dinars and took it from one of its members, after some time, when business was slow and the shop worked with losses, some of the members were reluctant to acknowledge that debt. The Nagid is asked how to proceed against them.

23. TS 12.126. 1229? (Heb.) Sugar factory (*maṭbakh sukkar*).
A badly torn and effaced court record written and signed by the judge Yehiel b. Eliakim, the Aleppine (dated documents 1213-1233). Joseph and his son Abu 'l-ʿAlā, both physicians, accept the scholar Mufaḍḍal as third partner in a sugar factory, each of them sharing one-third of profit and loss. Mufaḍḍal pays 50 dinars to his grandfather (probably a banker), which will be used for orders of payment for *kand* (not *qand*, which is the Arabic form of the Persian word from which also our *candy* is derived), presumably raw sugar; another 50 dinars he pays to the two partners directly. The date cannot be read with certainty.

24. TS NS J 30. March, 1232. Minyat Ziftā Jawād. Tannery.
After the dissolution of a partnership in a tannery, *madbagha*, in that provincial town the three partners, Rāḍī ("Satisfied"), Mufaḍḍal ("Favorite"), both Kohens, and Ṭāhir ("Pure") quarreled, and their litigations came even before the Nagid Abraham Maimuni, after they had been fought out before Muslim courts. The incomplete court record contains references to hides worth 17 dinars, allegedly taken by one partner, and to 35 dinars in cash which another claimed to have paid to one of his fellow partners. The document, signed by the local judge, Gamliel b. Simḥa ("Joy") shows that the members of the former tanners' partnership were still far from a settlement. Concerning the value of the dinar at that time see Appendix D, section 61, page 382, below.

25. TS 13 J 37, f. 6. May, 1238. Sugar factory.
Court record, written and signed by Solomon (son of the judge Elijah,

see no. 21). Only about one-third of the document has been preserved. Abu 'l-Riḍā Yiḥyē b. Samuel, son-in-law of the Nagid Abraham Maimuni, had a partnership in a maṭbakh with Shelah al-Makīn. A sum of 90 dinars is mentioned, as well as *taqsīm,* literally: partition, meaning dissolution of the partnership. The rest remains uncertain because of the fragmentary state of the MS.

26. Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 16 *. 1240. Sugar factory.

The brothers Abu 'l-Riḍā and Faḍl Allah, sons of Berākhōt Ibn al-Lebdī, who had partly inherited from their father and partly bought from their other brothers a "big" sugar factory, accepted Joseph b. Peraḥyā and Peraḥyā b. Nissīm as partners, the former paying 400, and the latter 200 dinars. The profit was to be divided in equal shares between the brothers who managed the factory and the capitalists, but, as a matter of precaution, the factory had to be registered in the name of the major financer of the common undertaking. On his side, Joseph b. Peraḥyā promises to make no misuse of his rights, while imposing on the brothers that each *ṭarḥa,* or mold, produced, should be reckoned as bringing a return of 2 dinars, irrespective of the quantity made and the government tax imposed at any time. The end of the document is lost. Another document referring to this maṭbakh shows that part of its building was situated within the city precincts (for which a ground tax was to be paid) and another part outside of it (TS NS J 215, cf. p. 89, above, and p. 412 n. 32).

27. TS 8 J 27, f. 11 *. Mamluk period. Cheese-making.

Master Raḍī b. 'Abd al-'Azīz and master Yeshū'ā Dukhān conclude a partnership in the manufacture of cheese and other dairy products. Raḍī will be active in the workshop, Dukhān in the store, but all expenses and income will be shared equally even if one of them would happen to make a find. Dukhān provided the capital, 1,000 *niṣf fiḍḍa,* half dirhems, of which he paid 800 immediately, while Raḍī brought in 50 qinṭārs of *ḥālūm* cheese. Raḍī was responsible for the accounts. Incomplete.

# *Appendix D*

# THE EXCHANGE RATE OF GOLD AND SILVER MONEY

Gold coins were the standard money in Fatimid times (969-1171).[1] "The rate of exchange is 36" means that for 1 dinar one received 36 dirhems at the time when that remark was made. This rate was in constant fluctuation, caused partly by deterioration of the silver content, partly by the fact that during most of this period silver money was imported to Egypt and Tunisia and not coined there, and partly by secondary agents, such as hoarding in time of panic or calamity. Modern research has done much to clarify the general course of the monetary history of the High Middle Ages.[2] The data assembled here from the Geniza provide a more detailed picture of the relationship between gold and silver coins, the knowledge of which is indispensable for the proper understanding of texts referring to economic matters.

This relationship between gold and silver money is illustrated in the Geniza papers in various ways. Often, the official (or rather: market) rate of exchange is explicitly stated, sometimes accompanied by a remark about the high or low value of silver at that time. In other cases we read about actual transactions of exchange made, or of rates stipulated in contracts. Occasionally, the market price and the actual rate of exchange obtained are indicated together. In still other cases we are able to calculate the rate from other data provided. Finally, remarks in a letter about economic conditions in general are likely to explain the reason for a high or low rate of exchange mentioned in it.

Most of this material was published by me in *JESHO*, 8 (1965), 1–46, accompanied by notes from the pens of Dr. George C. Miles and Professor Paul Balog. These notes are included here in abbreviated form and marked with M. and B. respectively. In conclusion, the meaning and significance of the data presented are briefly evaluated.

The two numbers, separated by :, at the end of the first line of each section summarize the exchange rate discussed in it, for example 1:30 in section 1 means that 1 dinar was worth 30 dirhems.

1. TS 16.105. Fustat, March 26, 986. 1:30.

A marriage contract, in which the bridegroom gives to his bride, a freedwoman, 12-½ silver pieces (*zūz*, Heb.), due to her according to Jewish law, adding to them, as was usual, a voluntary bridal gift, consisting of 5 dinars, which were given to her at the time of the contract, and 15 dinars to be

paid "later" (the *mu'akhkhar,* which was paid at the husband's death or at a divorce). On her side, she brought in a marriage portion of 45 dinars, a very high sum for a freedwoman (her former master was of a noble and rich family). The marriage portion, like the mu'akhkhar, had to be restituted to the wife after the death of the husband or at the time of divorce. The total of the bridal gift and the marriage portion is assessed as follows:

60 gold pieces (i.e., 45, the marriage portion, plus 15, the mu'akhkhar)
162-½ silver pieces (i.e., 12-½ plus 150, representing 5 dinars).

At first glance, such a low value of the silver at such an early period is rather surprising. Muqaddasi, p. 240, reports, however, that some time after the Fatimid conquest of Egypt, the value of the dirhem was low (see Balog, "History," p. 115). This might be reflected here.

(Probably fractional dirhems, such as ½-dirhem pieces, which then made the bulk of the circulation, are intended [Miles, *Fatimid* Coins, nos. 116–124] M.B.)

2. TS Arabic Box 30, f. 284. Fustat, April, 1003. 1:37.7.

A day-to-day account of the income of a textile store for the months Jumādā I and II of the Muslim year 393. After the lapse of two-and-a-half weeks or so, the junior partner or employee changed the silver received into gold and handed it over to the senior partner or employer. 245 dirhems made 6.5 dinars and, two weeks later, 187.5 dirhems = 5 dinars.

According to Maqrīzī's *Treatise on the Famines*, trans. G. Wiet in *JESHO,* 5 (1962), 15 ff., Sauvaire, p. 276, Balog, *History*. p. 115, a serious crisis of the dirhem started in A.H. 395 (began on Oct. 8, 1004), until it reached the bottom of 1:34 in 397 (began on Sept. 27, 1006). It could not have been caused, as Maqrīzī suggests, by the low level of the Nile in 395, since it is already evident in 393. Our document does not comment on the low rate of the dirhem.

(Also possibly fractions of dirhems are intended [Miles, *Fatimid Coins,* nos. 176–191]. M.B.)

3. ULC Or 1080 J 291. Tunisia, 1024. 1:24.

A huge account, written on vellum, for 23 bales received in Tunisia from Egypt and over eleven hundred pieces of clothing sent to the East. The sums are given in rubā'īs, or quarter dinars, and in dirhems. Their additions prove that one dirhem had the value of ⅙ rubā'ī, which represents an exchange rate of 1:24.

| Column IV | Quarter dinars | Dirhems |
|---|---|---|
| | 74 | ¾ quarter (reckoned as 4-½ dirhems) |
| | 65 | 1-½ |
| | 4 | 4 |
| Total | 143 | 10 dirhems |
| Column V | 53 | 2 |
| | 67 | 3 |
| | 2 | ½ quarter (reckoned as 3 dirhems) |
| Total | 122 | 8 dirhems |

The rate of exchange officially fixed prior to this date was 1:18 (cf. Balog, *History*, p. 115). Tunisia, at that time, as its coins prove, belonged monetarily to the Fatimid empire (see Idris, *Zirides*, p. 539).

(Fatimid dirhems at this time very uncommon [Miles, *Fatimid Coins*, nos. 257–258] M.)

3*a*. TS 16.374. Ed., see Shaked, *Bibliography*, p. 71. 1022. 1:24.

A marriage contract from Mastaura, Asia Minor. The money concerned is, of course, Byzantine. The document is quoted here for the sake of completeness. The bridal gift of 200 zūz of silver is described as being worth 8-⅓ dinars (the Hebrew *dīnār* is used). 24 Byzantine silver kerations correspond indeed to one chrysun or gold piece (cf. A. Andreades, *Byzantion*, 1 [1924], 79). T. Reinach, however, who discusses this detail in *Mélanges Schlumberger* (Paris, 1924), pp. 131–132, comes to the conclusion that the definition given refers to the time of the emperor Constantine and not to A.D. 1022. In corroboration of Reinach's thesis it should be noted that in the later part of the contract, the chrysun is referred to with the Hebrew word *zāhūv*, gold piece, and not with *dīnār*. On the other hand, one has always to keep in mind that the medieval scribes regarded inconsistency—or perhaps: variations—in the use of terms as a virtue rather than a vice.

4. TS 13 J 8, f. 2. Tunisia, summer, 1029. 1:12?

A document issued in Tunisia (Qayrawān or al-Mahdiyya) in Tammuz (began on June 15, 1029) and quoted in a court record of Fustat. "A debt of 280 silver pieces (*kesāfīm*, Heb.), one piece being worth two qīrāṭs."

In the whole of the Geniza, which is permeated by Tunisian material, I have never come across the term "qīrāṭ" in the meaning of half a dirhem. It would also have been a tautology to say that 1 dirhem equals 2 half dirhems. According to Idris, *Zirides*, p. 641, however, qīrāṭ was used in this sense in that country. Since several emissions of silver used to be current in Tunisia (see below), the definition "worth two qīrāṭs" refers perhaps to the standard half dirhem. Otherwise the reference is to gold qīrāṭs and the rate was 1:12, which was quite common for full value silver coins (cf. below, sec. 24 and elsewhere).

(According to a communication from Professor P. Grierson, these coins probably were Byzantine miliaresia, regularly worth 2 carats. The merchants were using foreign money.)

5–10. From five letters addressed to Joseph Ibn ʿAwkal or referring to him (sec. 9) and an account almost certainly destined for him (sec. 10).

5. TS 12.282. Vellum. Qayrawān, *ca.* 1005-1035. 1:17 and regarded as low.

The writer of this only partly preserved letter was one of the Tāhertī brothers of Qayrawān, about whom see page 181, above. He reports about a consignment of silver money (ʿAzīziyya and Muʿizziyya dirhems are mentioned) worth the enormous sum of 1,230 dinars. (These must be North African Fatimid fractional dirhems. M.) Near the end of the letter he says: "*wa-siʿr al-fiḍḍa hāhunā yā sayyidī al-manbūt 17 ghayr dāniq liʾann darāhim al-Andalus kathīra wa-kull al-asʿār taqif ʿalayhā.*" "The price of silver here, my lord, namely the coined one, is 17 less one dāniq, for the dirhems of Spain are plenty and all the prices are based on them." (It is interesting that Spanish dirhems circulated in Qayrawān. The output of dirhems by the Umayyads of Spain was tremendous. M.)

For *manbūt*, cf. *manbit*, "argent," Dozy, *Supplément*, p. 634*a*, and *munab-*

*bat*, "embossed," Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, p. 1320. I take it as coined silver, as against silver vessels, which were traded according to weight and normally obtained a price lower than the equivalent weight of coins. In any case, the context shows that dirhems are intended here. For the rate 1:17, see also page 388, below.

6. TS 12.367. Vellum. Tunisia, *ca.* 1005-1035. 1:27.

In a report about the prices of commodities (presumably in Qayrawān): *wal-fiḍḍa kāsida wal-ṣarf 27.* "Silver sells badly. The rate of exchange is 27."

This does not mean that 1:27 was regarded as either high or low. Commodities are sometimes expressly reported in these letters as selling badly, irrespective of their prices.

7. Mosseri L 52⁺. Alexandria, *ca.* 1005-1035. 1:33-½.

It was winter, many ships were under repair and many travelers were detained in the city along with five thousand bales of merchandise. The price of new wheat: 9 waybas per dinar; old wheat, 11 waybas. *Al-sarf* (the writer, a man from Tripoli, as usual in that place, writes *s* for *ṣ*) *33 wa-niṣ' bilā* (thus, not: *illā*) *ḥabba.* "The rate of exchange is 33-½ approximately." With this statement the letter concludes.

"Without a ḥabba" cannot mean: "less one ḥabba" for this coin throughout the Geniza documents is ¹⁄₇₂ of a dinar, and not a fraction of a dirhem. I take *bilā ḥabba* as being the opposite of ḥabba ḥabba, "exactly," a very common phrase.

8. TS 12.124⁺. Vellum. Tunisia, *ca.* 1005-1035. 1:40-½.

"The total price [for a consignment sent from Egypt] after the deduction of the discount and government dues was 828 (dirhems) at the rate of exchange of 40-½. Actually received (*qubiḍa fīh*) 20 dinars less 2 qīrāṭs and 1 ḥabba."

828:40.5 makes approximately 20.4. For reasons not stated, the actual payment was slightly lower. Such occurrences were frequent.

9. TS 12.566. Fustat, 1020-1030. 1:38–40.
Maghrebi dirhems 1:55–65–110.

Mūsā Ibn al-Majjānī (i.e., whose grandfather had come from the Tunisian town Majjāna), who for many years had been Ibn 'Awkal's chief representative in Qayrawān, writing from Fustat, informs a business friend in Alexandria that he had dissolved his relationship with his former "master" (*mu'allim*). Mūsā, himself a very prominent merchant, died in 1039.

Line 16: *wal-ṣarf 40 bi-dīn' al-qudum, wal-judud 38. wa-ḥāl al-maghribiyya mā yimshī minhā illā mā kān jayyid. wa-si'r al-jiyād minhā tiswā min 55 ilā 65 wal-muqāraba mā lahā si'r illā bi-si'r al-sabk, wa-qad bi't alladhī kān 'indī 110 bi-dīn'.* "The exchange rate is 40 for old and 38 for new (dirhems) per dinar. As to the Maghrebi dirhems, only the very good ones sell, they are worth 55–65 per dinar. The mediocre ones have no price, except their metal value for founding. I sold what I had for 110 per dinar. Do not buy anything of that stuff." Later in the letter he remarks that he had sent to the addressee 200 *excellent* Maghrebi (dirhems) to cover the expenses for a bale of merchandise forwarded from Alexandria to al-Mahdiyya. According to the exchange rate for good Maghrebi dirhems indicated in the letter, this would amount to about 3.3 dinars, a reasonable amount for expenses on an average bale sent from Alexandria to Tunisia. (Probably, the base Ḥammūdid dirhems of Sabta [Ceuta] are intended. See Miles, *Coins of the Spanish Mulūk al-Ṭawā'if*. M.)

10. TS Box J 1, f. 54. Vellum. Tunisia, *ca.* 1005-1035. 1:39.
Four pages from a huge account book, similar to the one dated 1024 (cf. above, sec. 3), containing details about 120 bales of flax costing 1,278-¼ dinars and 32,421 dirhems. In sixteen cases, the silver was changed into gold as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| 11 bales, rate of exchange | 39 dirhems |
| 3 " " | 39 " less ¼ |
| 1 bale | 39-¼ |
| 1 " | 39 for 1 dinar less 1 qīrāṭ and 1 ḥabba. |

11–18. Eight dated exchange rates from the middle of the eleventh century.

11. Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 65*a*. Egypt, 1045. 1:33-⅓.
Most detailed report in the handwriting of Nahray b. Nissīm written in Egypt for his senior partner Barhūn b. Isaac Tāhertī in Qayrawān.
"Account for sales made in 805 [i.e., the Jewish year 4805, corresponding to A.D. 1045], after the sailing of the ships [from Egypt, i.e., Aug.-Sept.]." The year 806, also referred to, began on Sept. 14, 1045. Line 16: "Cashed from . . . 193-½, which had to be changed (*wajab lahā ṣarf*) at the rate of 33-⅓. Received 6 dinars less 5 qīrāṭs" (193.5:33.3 = 5.8).

12. TS Box K 15, f. 53. Būṣīr, Upper Egypt, 1045-1046. 1:32(31.2).

Another two leaves from the same account, referring to business done in Būṣīr, the great center of flax-growing, situated at the entrance from the East into the Fayyūm district.
Col. I, l. 8: "13 dirhems, in gold: a quarter and a sixth [1:31.2]." Crossed out, since the writer summed up the dirhems received and converted them into dinars at the end of the account.
Col. IV, l. 5: *yajib lahā ṣarf* 32.

13. TS 20.180, *Nahray* 172. Qayrawān, January 27, 1048. 1:33-⅓.
Long letter by the senior partner, Barhūn Tāhertī (see sec. 11). As usual, the letter is dated by day and Jewish month. Moreover, it refers to terrible news brought by the *fuyūj*, the mail couriers, at the same time expressing consolation that Abū Naṣr is still alive. The reference is without doubt to the murder of Abū Sa'd, the "vizier" of the Fatimid dowager queen, on Sunday, Oct. 25, 1047, who was survived, albeit only for a comparatively short period, by his brother Abū Naṣr.[3]
After mentioning a consignment of 30 dinars, the writer continues in lines 19–22: "In a previous letter I had announced that I sent you one thousand dirhems with Abū Bakr al-Rashīdī. Later, however, he refused to carry them and I changed them for you into these 30 dinars" (1000:30 = 33-⅓).

14. TS 20.69. al-Mahdiyya, August, 1048. 1:45.
Another, even longer letter by the senior partner Barhūn Tāhertī (see sec. 13), accompanied, on the reverse side, by detailed accounts.
Verso, ll. 26–27: *wa-ḥamalt ilayh fi 'l-qāfila . . . raṭl wa-thulth ḥarīr al-thaman 90 dirham . . . wa-ḥamalt ilayh ṣuḥbat Abī Zikrī ben Sighmār 10 arṭāl wa-wuqiyya ḥarīr, al-niṣf li-bn 'ammī, 'alayh fi 'l-niṣf 7 'danānīr wa-niṣ'.*
"I sent you in the caravan [i.e., overland] 1-½ pounds silk, price 90 dirhems. I sent you also with A. Z. [who traveled by boat] 10 pounds and 1 w. silk, half of which is for my cousin. He has to pay for it 7-½ dinars."
Thus, one pound of silk cost 1-⅓ dinars, corresponding to 90:1-⅓ = 67.5

dirhems. This presupposes a rate of exchange of 1:45. Had the quality of the silk in the second case been different from the first, the writer would not have failed to comment upon it.

The letter refers to *hādhihi 'l-sana al-ṣa'ba,* "this hard year."

(Earlier and better coins of the same ruler circulated concurrently with later, worse ones, hence the different exchange rates in one year [see secs. 13 and 14]. During the reign of al-Mustanṣir the silver content of the dirhem went down from 47 to 34 percent. B.)

15. TS 13 J 8, f. 13, *Nahray* 170. Qayrawān, 1055-1056. 1:50(60).

Containing also rates of exchange for several local emissions.

An account submitted to the same addressee by the brother of Barhūn Tāhertī, containing four references to rates of exchange. The account is divided by horizontal lines into six sections (A–F).

A, ll. 3–4: *14-⅔ dīnār yajib lahā ṣarf waqt awwal bay' al-lāk 60 bi-dīnār, yajib lahā 880 dirham.* "14-⅔ dinars make 880 dirhems, the rate of exchange being at the time of the first sale of the lacquer 60."

C, ll. 11–12: "Half a bale of cowrie shells was sold after the death of our relative for 11,000 dirhems. At that time, the *ṣarf* was 260. But I reckon it at its value today, namely the coinage of 'Azzūn, which has a fineness of one and a quarter (*ḍarb 'Azzūn 'iyār* 1-¼), worth 200 per dinar, proceeds 55 dinars" (11,000:200 = 55).

D. "The following is the sum of the dirhems of low value (*al-waraq al-ghayr muthmina*): 14,055. The first to be received was the coinage of Hāshim *lsfl.*[4] Before it had come dirhems 'exposed to the sun' (*mushammasa*).[5] At the arrival of the lacquer, the price of the mushammasa had already been fixed, namely at 110 per dinar and the price of Hāshim's coinage, 140. We assume now that the two emissions had been mixed, although each emission should be evaluated according to the actual coins (*wa-kayf an mā yuḥkam fī kull waqt illā bil-dirham alladhī yuḍrab*).[6] However, as a matter of precaution [7] I regard them as mixed, which would make 125 per 1 dinar and for these 14,055 dirhems—112 dinars."

The orphans of the relative referred to as having died shortly before are involved here. For both religious and humanitarian reasons one had to be extremely careful not to take from orphans more than they owed. Therefore, the writer prefers to give them the benefit of the doubt.

F. "He owes you expenses for the daughter of his sister for the [Jewish] year 815 (Sept. 5, 1054, to Sept. 24, 1055, a leap year of 13 months) 630 dirhems of the coinage of Khallūf, having today a rate of exchange of 1:50 and this is at present the currency (*jawāz*) of Qayrawān. However, at the time when the money was spent on her, the rate of exchange was 35 [the reading 5 is not certain]. We reckon it at its present value. Thus, there has to be paid for them 12-½ dinars. Subsequently, you spent for his niece 1,370 dirhems, from various emissions (literally: foundings, *sabk*) which we reckon at a rate of 137, which makes 10 dinars. Total 22-½ dinars. In fact, owing to the circumstances, in addition to the 10, 40 more dinars were spent on her." The concluding sentence seems to mean that others had spent for the orphan far more than the addressee.

(One would expect the coinages of 'Azzūn and Khallūf to be Zīrid currencies. But we know of almost no Zīrid dirhems [see Hazard, *Numismatic History of North Africa*, pp. 55, 233]. M.)

16. TS Box Misc. 8, f. 65. Egypt, 1056. 1:40.

A double leaf from a large account for a partner, divided into sections. Section C opens with a reference to consignments sent in the year 49, that is, the Muslim year 449, which began on March 10, 1057. Thus, the preceding sections A and B, which are the continuation of a lost leaf, present entries with regard to the year 1056.

B, l. 4: "He owes to Ibn al-Majjānī (the son of the Majjānī mentioned above, sec. 9, a prominent Qayrawānese merchant like his father) 40 dirhems *waraq*—1 dinar."

17. TS Box J 1, f. 1. Egypt, 1059. *Ca.* 1:40.

A large account in the hand of Nahray b. Nissīm, in which reference is made to the Muslim years 449 and 450 (March, 1057-Feb., 1059). Thus this account is, at the earliest, from 1059.

On p. c, margin, 14 dirhems are converted into *thulth* (dinar) and ½ qīrāṭ $(14 = \frac{8\text{-}½}{24})$.

18. TS NS J 111. Egypt, 1060. *Ca.* 1:40.

A much-damaged account written in Nahray's hand and, as usual, in Hebrew script. On page *d*, upside down, reference in Arabic script to the year (4)51, which began on Feb. 10, 1059. Thus, we are here at the earliest in 1060.

P. c, l. 1: 11 dirhems *takūn*, "is the equivalent of," 1 rubāʿī and half a qīrāṭ $(11 = \frac{6\text{-}½}{24})$.

19. TS NS J 28. Egypt, *ca.* 1060. 1:40.

Report, in the same hand, about sales of textiles. Days and months, but no year, indicated. The size and arrangement of the pages, as well as the names and some other details suggest that this and the following account are of the same period as sec. 17.

Verso, col. I, l. 12: "For 3,138 dirhems, with the deduction of 28 dirhems as a correction (*baʿd 28 drh' min taṣḥīḥ*), at the rate of 40:78 dinars less ¼." 3,138 − 28 = 3,110:40 = 77-¾.

20. TS NS J 127. Egypt, *ca.* 1060. 1:40.
Maghrebi dirhems 1:70.

P. *d*, l. 14: "For 45 dirhems—1 dinar and ⅛" $(45 = \frac{27}{24} = 40)$. P. *a*, l. 2 from bottom: "He owes me ½ dinar for 35 Maghrebi dirhems."

(Maghrebi = Ḥammūdid? [See Hazard, *Numismatic History of North Africa*, p. 233 and above, sec. 9]. M.)

21. TS NS J 198*. Egypt, *ca.* 1080? 1:40.57.

Detailed banker's account in the same hand, but in different arrangement and reflecting transactions of a type different from that of sec. 20. The account is written on the back of a letter addressed to Nahray b. Nissīm.

P. *a*, l. 23: *min Bishr al-ṣayrafī ʿan thaman darāhim aṣlhā alfayn, siʿr dīnārayn wa-suds wa-½ qīrāṭ al-100, al-thaman 43 wa-½ wa-rb'*. "Received from the money changer Bishr for the total of two thousand dirhems at the price of 2 dinars, ⅙ and half a qīrāṭ per 100 (dirhems) the total of 43-¾ (dinars)." 100 dirhems = 2.1875 dinars.

22. TS 20.122. Sicily-Qayrawān, 1040-1060. 1:40.

Detailed letter, sent from Palermo to Alexandria by Ḥayyīm b. ʿAmmār, representative of the merchants in the Sicilian capital. Dated documents

signed by him and identified thus far range from 1052 to 1066. Since the letter contains various references to Maṣlīaḥ, a Jewish chief judge of Sicily who was active in the 1030's and 1040's, it might belong to that period. Hardly later than the 1050's.

L. 20: "I also left with him [a merchant in Mazara, Sicily] Qayrawān dirhems (*qarawiyya*) to the amount of less than a hundred rubā'īs, their *ṣarf* being 40 per dinar."

(We have next to no Zīrid silver coins [See above, p. 373, sec. 15.] M.)

23. TS NS J 12, *Nahray* 176. al-Mahdiyya, between 1045 and 1057. Local emission 1:200.

Letter by Barhūn b. Isaac Tāhertī, see above, sec. 11, referring to his travel to Qayrawān. Ll. 19 and 22: *wal-ṣarf* 200.

(Probably Fatimid billon or base coins [see sec. 15]. M.)

24. TS 16.339, *Nahray* 179. Qayrawān, between 1045 and 1057. 1:17 (full silver) 1:50 (low-value dirhems).

The brothers Barhūn and Joseph, sons of Mūsā Tāhertī (cousins of sec. 23) write to Nahray.

L. 17: *wal-ṣarf dūn al-50 bi-dīn' wa-ṣa'b an nadfa'hā wa-hī lā tiswā al-thaman.* "The rate of exchange is less than 50 per dinar. It would be hard to pay such a sum, since they (the dirhems, it seems) are not worth that price."

Verso, ll. 18–19: *wa-amma as'ār baladna fa-mā lahā qā'ida ḥatta 'l-ṣarf yazīd . . . mathalan 17 wa-yanquṣ mithlhā 'alā qadr al-ṭalab.* (After having reported that the prices of Egyptian flax had risen in "Sicily" [i.e., Palermo], the letter continues:) "The prices of our own city follow no principle [i.e., are not steady]. Even the rate of exchange one day is over 17 and similarly becomes less than that—all according to demand." In another part of the letter, it was explained that the country was "weak" and therefore even a small change in supply upset the prices. Cf. page 220, above.

Unfortunately, the last but one word before the number 17 is effaced. One expects "the rate of exchange rises by. . . ." In case our reading and interpretation are correct, the apparent contradiction between the two passages would find its explanation in the context. The first statement is preceded by references to purses (*ṣurra*) with thousands of dirhems sent to the addressee, who, of course, was aware of the fact that those were low-value dirhems. The second statement, then, would refer to full-silver dirhems ($3 \times 17 = 51$). In addition, line 10 contains the following remark: *wa-raja' al-'iyār bi-Sfāqṣ 3,* literally: "The fineness [of the silver dirhem] in Sfax again has become three," that is, 3 low-value dirhems were accepted for 1 full-silver coin, a remark that had its reason in the fact that the relationship of the two types of silver money was by no means steady (see p. 388, below).

25. TS 16.279, *Nahray* 196. Tunisia, *ca.* 1058-1059. Local emission 1:1,000.

At the beginning of the letter, the writer refers to the death of the most honored member of the community, Barhūn b. Mūsā Tāhertī (see sec. 23), which came shortly after the sack of Qayrawān in 1057 (in which the writer was even robbed of his clothing).

L. 15: "I have sent you a bag (*kharīṭa*), with 1,424 old dirhems, worth approximately[8] one-and-a-half dinars. Please find a way (*taḥtāl*) for exchanging them at any rate appearing to you as reasonable and send me a little flax, so that I may make me some clothing, for I have come here [presumably: al-Mahdiyya] only with a curtain of canvas (*killat khaysh*) on my head and around my waist, and [send me] a pair of shoes for my feet, wide around the

ankles and strong, as well as some *Ṭalḥī* paper[9] so that I may be able to write a letter to Baghdad or to Palestine."

The writer was a scholar who corresponded with the Jewish academies in Baghdad and Jerusalem. His letter is a moving illustration of the disaster wrought on the local population by the invasion of "the *Ḥijāzis,*" as the Hilāl and Sulaym are referred to in the Geniza.

In sec. 26 we find an even lower rate of exchange for a local emission.

(Cf. Hazard, *Numismatic History of North Africa,* no. 871. M.)

26. Bodl. MS Heb. b 13, f. 49 (Cat. 2834, no. 30). al-Mahdiyya, 1059-1062. Local emission 1:less than 200. 1:1,600 (later).

Both the writer and the addressee of this letter occur frequently in the Geniza. Its content, compared with that of other letters, fixes its time at the period indicated above.

"I went down to Sūsa to see the family. The consignment that I had brought was sold (during my absence). The rate of exchange had been less than 200. Then, while my dirhems were there, the rate went down to 1,600 per dinar, thus I got for a dinar a qīrāṭ."

The last statement is to be taken with a grain of salt, of course. He received ⅛, not 1/24, of the normal worth of his dirhems. Such a great and sudden devaluation can be explained perhaps by those dirhems being taken out of circulation.

27. TS 12.794, *Nahray* 203. Tunisia, 1060's. European or local emission 1:200 and 1:230.

Regular dirhems 1:50 and less.

Persons and transactions mentioned assign the letter to the 1060's.

Ll. 14–23: "The sale [of the pepper] to the Rūm was made in dirhems. I left them with the banker (*ṣayrafī*) to buy with them dinars. The rate of exchange rises every day. He exchanged a part of them into 40 dinars. The rate went down to [literally: attained, *intahā ilā*] 200 and even 230 per dinar. I added for you a certain amount of old dirhems and put everything beneath the earth. At this time, I took them out and had them assayed (*nantaqidha*). Those that are good enough to be sent to Egypt, I forwarded to you, and those that are not good for that purpose I sold."

Later on, the writer reports that old dirhems were very much in demand in Tunisia.

Verso, l. 29: ". . . [not preserved] . . . 2 dinars at a rate of exchange of 50 dirhems, which is much, for today they are worth less."

28. TS 20.127. al-Mahdiyya, 1064? Full silver coins 1:22.

A long letter of eighty lines by an Andalusian residing in Tunisia, writing to another Andalusian, a relative, sojourning in Egypt. Both are well known from many other letters. Despite this and the many names and other details mentioned in the letter, its exact time has not yet been found out. The following quotation perhaps might be helpful for closer identification:

Ll. 65–68: "The city was dead [there was no business] because of our being menaced by the enemy. During the winter we were in great trouble (*ḍīqa*) until, through God's grace, the enemy was chased away. The city is now, thank God, in good shape: low prices, security, and a sultan who has mercy with the people, may God have mercy with him and keep him for us and for this blessed frontier seaport (*thaghr*)."

The reference to the sultan gives the impression of a new ruler, who could only be Tamīm, who succeeded his father Muʿizz in 1062. In 1063, he

was attacked by Hammū al-Barghawāṭī of Sfax, who had paid homage to the Ḥammādite al-Nāṣir and came within six or eight miles of al-Mahdiyya (cf. Idris, *Zirides,* pp. 255–256). Our letter could well allude to this war which occurred at the very beginning of Tamīm's rule. No Italian or Norman ships are known to have troubled al-Mahdiyya in the early years of Tamīm (cf. Idris, *Zirides,* pp. 283 ff.), and wintertime anyhow would not have been suitable for an attack by sea.

The following detail also might be indicative of the period. Margin, l. 4: "I have changed the Mahdiyya money into Sicilian quarter dinars, for I have no hope that the former is current in Egypt (*takhruj 'indkum*)."

L. 68: *wa-si'r al-fiḍḍa el-nuqra 'indna 22 drh' bi-dīn'.* "The price of *nuqra* silver is 22 dirhems per dinar."

(For al-Mahdiyya money see my remark to sec. 25. M.)

29. Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 52. Alexandria, 1060's. 1:25 or 20.

A refugee from Qayrawān reports to his brother in Fustat the death of his son in Alexandria. The young man had written letters to his uncle from Qayrawān at the time of the Hilālian invasion.

L. 11: "The expenses for the burial amounted to fifty dirhems (*tiswā 2* •), worth two [or two-and-a-half] dinars." The unusual dot above the line might serve as a symbol for ½. Normally, other signs were used to express that fraction.

30. TS 16.13. Tunisia, *ca.* 1040-1070. 1:11-½ less one kharrūba.

A letter from Palermo, Sicily, addressed to Joseph b. Mūsā Tāhertī in Egypt (cf. sec. 24), and reporting about sales made in Tunisia: *wa-kān bi't al-fiḍḍa si'r 11-½ illā kharrū(ba) bi-dīn'. ṣaḥḥ waznhā 332 wa-rub(') ṣaḥḥ fīhā ba'd al-ju'l 95 rubā'ī.* "I sold the silver at the price of 11-½ less one kharrūba per dinar. The weight of the silver was 332-¼. Price obtained after the deduction of the commission, 95 quarter dinars."

According to the exchange rate, approximately 29 dinars (332-¼:11-¼) were obtained, which would make around 115 quarters and not 95, as stated here. A commission of 20 out of 115 quarter dinars is out of the question..Thus the rubā'īs presumably had a higher value at that time than the dinars, which occasionally occurred. I should like to remark that the letter is written in an exceptionally beautiful and clear hand and there is no doubt whatsoever about the words or the numerals.

(Professor Grierson suggests that here, as in sec. 4, Byzantine silver coins are referred to.)

31. TS 16.263. al-Mahdiyya, ca. 1040-1065. 1:36.

Fragment of a large letter by the same Joseph b. Mūsā Tāhertī (cf. sec. 30), addressed, it seems, to Egypt. "We were worried about you because of the enemy"—probably refers to travel by sea from al-Mahdiyya to Alexandria. The persons and ships referred to appear in letters between 1045 and 1065 approximately.

"For 5 dinars I paid 181 dirhems."

32. TS 8 J 16, f. 31. Būṣīr, *ca.* 1040-1065. 1:35.

This is Joseph Tāhertī, who, like many other Tunisians, used to stay in Būṣīr in order to buy flax and to supervise its combing and packing (cf. sec. 12). The letter is addressed to his cousin Barhūn b. Ṣāliḥ, who sojourned in Fustat.

Verso, l. 1: "When the price (*si'r*) of dirhems improves, exchange them for me. I have heard that they stand at 35 (*annhā kānat 35*); if they have obtained that price, exchange them."

33. TS 13 J 13, f. 11, *Nahray* 58. Fustat, *ca.* 1045–1065. 1:37.
'Ayyāsh b. Ṣadaqa, who had copied sec. 32 for Joseph Tāhertī (adding a postscript in his own name), here writes to Nahray, who was then in Būṣīr, *from* Fustat.

Verso, l. 7: "The exchange rate (*ṣarf*) here is 37 per dinar. Kindly inform me how is the *ṣarf* at your place." The writer's assumption that the provincial town has an exchange rate by itself, is noteworthy.

34. TS Box 28, f. 246, *Nahray* 169. Alexandria, *ca.* 1050-1065. 1:36.
This is a letter by Barhūn b. Ṣāliḥ Tāhertī (cf. sec. 32) to Nahray sent from Barqa, Cyrenaica, but complaining about a bad customer in Alexandria. "He paid me 200 dirhems, reckoning them as about 6 dinars [i.e., 1:33], while the exchange rate was 36."

35. Gottheil-Worrell, *XXVII*, pp. 120–123. Jerusalem, *ca.* 1050-1070. 1:36-½.
Ll. 31–36. The editors took *rubā'iyya* as meaning "city square," which caused much confusion among scholars engaged in the study of the historical topography of Jerusalem. In fact, it means simply "quarter dinars" and the purport of the text is as follows: Although the exchange rate of the dinar was 36-½, the writer received for the rubā'īs of his business friend only 20 dirhems per dinar, because they had lost their normal appearance; *wa-qad laḥiqhā khaḍra min al-taḥmīr allatī* (sic) *ḥummirat fī miṣr wa-wazant 'alā hādhihi 'l-baqiyya allatī tabaqqat dirham wa-niṣf li-man 'āwadhā bil-taḥmīr.* "They were affected by verdigris through the 'reddening' made in Egypt. I paid one-and-a-half dirhems to have the remaining rubā'īs re-reddened." The Geniza actually contains a detailed description of the technique of the "reddening" of coins (JTS Geniza Misc. 23).

36. TS 13 J 16, f. 12, top, *Nahray* 83. Alexandria, *ca.* 1060-1080. 1:44.
"There are only a few dirhems to be had in Alexandria. They are worth 44. I am upset. May God turn everything to the good."

37. TS 10 J 32, f. 10, *Nahray* 78. Alexandria, *ca.* 1060-1080. 1:42–43.
L. 8: "The price of the dinars is 43–42." (It was customary to mention the higher sum first—unlike our own usage [see p. 218, above].)

As is proved by a reference to a deal in dates, both letters were written at one and the same time. One writer got excited about the rate of exchange, the other did not.

38. TS 8 J 27, f. 5, *Nahray* 39. Alexandria, *ca.* 1060-1080. 1:49.
L. 18: *wal-nās hōn taḥt 'aks min ṭama' al-ṣarf wa-hū al-yawm 49, wal-balad mutaḥayyir wa(l) -si'r al-qamḥ naqaṣ.* "People here are miserable because of the rapacious exchange rate. It is 49 today. The city is in turmoil and the price of the wheat has gone down."

Otherwise, the rather detailed letter does not betray any anxiety about abnormal times.

39. TS 8 J 18, f. 27, *Nahray* 119. Alexandria, *ca.* 1060-1080. 1:50.
"Please write me how the dirhems are in Fustat. The rate of exchange here is fifty per one dinar." This detail is reported among many other items and without any additional comment.

40. TS 8 J 19, f. 24, l. 12, *Nahray* 151. Egypt-Tunisia, *ca.* 1060-1080. 1:less than 50.
This is a letter from Tunisia, sent to Nahray when he was at the height of his career. Among many other consignments, 20 dinars are sent as a pay-

ment for 1,000 dirhems, which Nahray had dispatched to Tunisia, because they obtained there a higher price than in Egypt. This means, that in Egypt he had to pay considerably more than 50 dirhems for 1 dinar.

Normally, silver money was sent from Tunisia to Egypt, not the other way.

41. DK 3 *. Fustat, *ca.* 1080. 1:50.

The names of both the writer and the addressee of the letter occur in a document dated 1079.

Sec. B: "Business here is slow and practically at a standstill. For there is much confusion because of the rate of exchange, which is at present 50 dirhems per one dinar more or less. An epidemic is raging in the environs of the city and, because of this, the flow of good dirhems has been cut off, so that every one has difficulties with his business" *ḥall bi'a 'alā jihātha wa-nqaṭa' al-dirham al-ṭayyib min al-nās wa-tḥayyarū* (spelled: *w'tḥyrw*) *'l-nās fī ma'ā'ishhim li-sabab dhālik.*

This slump of the dirhem in Fustat, according to this writer, who had just arrived from Alexandria, clearly owed to a specific local situation. It is interesting to note that the report seems to assume that the city had to rely for its steady supply of good silver money on the country and the province.

42. AIU VII E 193, *Nahray* 125. Alexandria, *ca.* 1050-1090. 1:60 and 1:62-½.

A letter with a postscript by Mūsā ben Abi 'l-Ḥayy, who appears in countless Geniza papers (one dated 1068; e.g., sec. 29 is addressed to him). Here, he sends to Nahray in Fustat 2,000 dirhems and asks him to sell them at the rate of 60 dirhems per dinar, and another 2,000 worth 16 dirhems per 1,000 dirhems, that is, 1:62.5. The letter contains many other details about transactions in coins (all gold), but no remark about exceptional times.

43. TS 13 J 15, f. 19, *Nahray* 108. Alexandria, *ca.* 1070. 1:48.

See page 90, above. 37-½ + 2-½ = 40 dirhems worth 20 qīrāṭs.

44. Westminster College, Cambridge, Fragm. Cairens. Misc. 51. al-Maḥalla in Lower Egypt, *ca.* 1095. 1:50.

The head of the Jewish local community congratulates the Ra'īs al-Yahūd on his return to power (in 1094) and notes that the new tax-farmer (a Jew!) of a government building rented to the community to be used as a synagogue, had raised the rent by 2 dinars. He adds: "The poor have more need for these 100 dirhems than the government." (Verso, ll. 6–8).

45. TS Box K 15, f. 97. Fustat, *ca.* 1100. 1:38.5.

In a list of receivers of alms 580 dirhems are converted into 15 dinars and 1-½ qīrāṭs. The time of the documents is ascertained through the signatures of three judges whose time is known from many other, dated, documents (Goitein, "Social Services," p. 83).

46. Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 57. Fustat, *ca.* 1100. 1:43.

A collection made for an orphan girl and her mother; 322 dirhems are converted into 7-½ dinars. A number of contributors appears in contemporary documents.

47. Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 29. *Ca.* 1100. 1:40.

Letter to a well-to-do physician who was with the army and, like other physicians dealt also in books. L. 8: 1,144-½ dirhems are worth (*qīmathā*) 28-¾ dinars. The names of several well-known persons are referred to.

48. TS 8 J 4, f. 18c. Alexandria, September/October, 1102. 1:106.6 (local emission?).

A beautifully written court record in which a settlement is made for a wife during the absence of her husband. Unfortunately, the left edge of the page is cut away. The missing words are complemented here in brackets.

L. 4: "She will receive every month three way[bas of grain, as well as] the cost of its grinding, one raṭl of Syro-Palestinian olive oil,[10] also every month, together with the wood [needed as fuel and] 20 dirhems the worth of which is ⅙ dinar and ½ qīrāṭ, *'ishrīn dirham alladhī qīmathā suds dīnār wa-niṣf qīrāṭ*.

$x = \frac{20 \times 48}{9} = 106.6$. Such a rate of exchange is unknown for Egypt from other Geniza documents. Most likely, the reference is to a local emission of low value used for small expenses. Alexandria was flooded with and much influenced by Maghrebis, who, as we have seen (cf. secs. 23, 25, and 26) were accustomed to such local money of low value.

49. ULC Or 1080 J 91, *India Book* 21. Alexandria, *ca.* 1125-1145. 1:12.5.

A letter to Abū Zikrī Kohen Sijilmāsī, representative of merchants in Fustat. The time of both the addressee and the writer, as well as of persons mentioned in the letter, is known from dated documents.

L. 8: "*Nuqra* silver coins are rare in Alexandria and their price (*si'r*) has risen. 100 are worth 8 to 8 less one eighth. I worked hard and searched for you all the hidden places, until I brought together for you and for Ibn Lebdi [silver coins] for about 140 dinars."

This statement presupposes that of dirhems which were not *nuqra* (i.e., full silver) at least 40 had to be given for 1 dinar.

(By this time, the dirhem must be Murābiṭ. In the twelfth century, at least until toward the end, there is evidently no silver east of the Maghreb, not even in Seljuk lands. M.)

50. TS 13 J 20, f. 23, *India Book* 230. Egyptian Rīf, 1127-1139. 1:37.

A letter to the same with greetings to the Gaon, of the Jewish academy, Maṣlīaḥ, who was in office from 1127 through 1139.

L. 6: "I sent you with Faraḥ 30 dinars [and ?] dirhems at the exchange rate of 37 for one dinar. By our religion, a fire which is not going out is burning in my heart because of them, *fī qalbī min ḥālhim nār lā taṭfā*."

I take this as meaning that the writer had to buy the dirhems at a high price and that the normal rate at that time was around 40 per dinar.

51. TS 20.80, *India Book* 273. Qalyūb-Fustat, *ca.* 1140. 1:35.

An extended fragment (about 1,300 words) of a letter to Ḥalfōn ben Nethanel, the India merchant, from his brother Ezekiel. The paragraph concerned is a complicated report about the sale of a great quantity of Sicilian cheese, effected in a dār wakāla (see p. 187, above). The price was to be paid after four months. The buyer took a loan of 50 dinars from a banker "at the rate of exchange of 1:35."

Does this mean that, in those days, silver, and not gold, was the standard? Or, did the banker, while granting the loan, reckon the dinar as being worth only 35 dirhems, when, in reality, it was worth 40 dirhems or more? See, however, the following items. See sec. 55, below.

52. TS 13 J 3, f. 4 *. Alexandria, January, 1143. 1:35.7.

The *ṣāḥib al-mawārīth* (Muslim judge in charge of estates) delivers to the Jewish authorities the goods of a foreign Jewish merchant who was drowned near Alexandria. Many items. In one case, 236 dirhems are converted into 6 dinars and 15 qīrāṭs.

53. TS 16.122. Ascalon, Palestine, 1142-1143. 1:34.
On verso, payments of rent by a tenant to the Jewish community of Ascalon for the year indicated. In one case, ¼ dinar is reckoned as being worth 8-½ dirhems.

54. TS 8 J 9, f. 19. Egypt, middle of the twelfth century 1:34.3.
Large fragment of a letter with accounts, especially of goods brought from Syria. "You have received from Muḥammad al-Shāmī 1-⅙ for the price (*'an qīmat*) of the 40 dirhems that he borrowed from me."

55. TS Box 8, f. 66 *. Sunbāt in Lower Egypt, July, 1150. 1:42.
" 'Awāḍ received one gold dinar at the rate of 42 silver pieces (*dīnār ayn ṣarfuh 42 waraq*) on account of the donkey" (Col. II, ll. 8–9).
Here, as in sec. 51 we see the dinar defined by an amount of low-value silver pieces.
The future student of this document should pay attention to the fact that in it *dirham* is used in two different meanings, as a coin and as a weight.
The account contains another statement that might indicate a quite different rate of exchange. It deals with the sale of ten pounds of silk costing 10 dinars (half the standard price) and of which 4 dinars had been paid. For the exchange of these 4 dinars (which the writer obviously had paid in silver), an agio of 6 dirhems waraq had to be added. After noting this, the account continues: "He [the seller of the silk] had received 2 ḥabbas more than 4 dinars, which makes 1-½." The latter amount can be only in silver dirhems. A ḥabba is one-third of a qīrāṭ and 1/72 of a dinar; 2/72 dinar = 3/2 dirhems would represent an exchange of 1:54 approximately.

56. TS 8 J 17, f. 18. Ed., see Shaked, *Bibliography*, p. 86.
Egyptian Rīf and Fustat, 1142-1159. 1:40.
A collection, made at the instruction of a Ra'īs al-Yahūd who was in office 1142-1159, on behalf of foreign Jews who had been captured by pirates. Twice (Col. I*v*, ll. 10–11, and Col. II*v*, l. 13), the *ṣarf* is expressly given as being 40. The sums were collected in nine provincial towns.

57. TS Box K 6, f. 149. Fustat, same date as preceding item. 1:39-½–40.
List of contributors to a collection, written in the unmistakable hand of the judge Samuel b. Sa'adya. Dated documents signed by him and identified thus far range from 1165 to 1203. Still it seems to me that this list is contemporary with sec. 56 and represents the collection made in the capital, complementing the one made in the province. For it differs from all the many others found in the Geniza with regard to Fustat by the high sums recorded and by the fact that the collection was made during fourteen days, at least, details concerning the first, second, thirteenth, and fourteenth days having been preserved (see p. 78, above). As far as extant, the list enumerates fifty contributions made in dinars, twelve in waraq and two in dirhems. It seems, however, that there was no difference between these two terms for silver money.
The rate of exchange obviously was 39-½–40 per dinar, for the waraq contributions of individuals amounted to 10, 19-½, 19-¾, 20 (four cases), 30, and 39 dirhems, clearly equivalents for ¼, ½, ¾, and 1 dinar, respectively.

58. TS 16.39. Fustat, in or around 1179 or 1183. 1:37-½.
Detailed account of a ritual slaughterer, specifying the various community officials and other persons to whom he had made payments of 7 dirhems week after week during a full year. Ritual slaughtering, like any other public source of revenue, was farmed out. The payments were made not to a com-

munal treasury, which did not exist, but to officials and other persons earmarked by the *parnas*, or social service officer in charge.

The long document is almost complete, but the date is torn away. It can be restituted approximately by a combination of the names mentioned and the correspondence of the days of the weeks and the months.

The community paid the poll tax for the ritual slaughterer as for other communal officials. As his occupation brought an income, he had to return to the community what it had outlaid for him, in the case concerned, 65 dirhems for 1-¾ dinars, which is most clumsily specified as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| For 1 dinar................. | 37-¼ dirhems |
| " ½ " .................. | 18-½ and ⅛ dirhems |
| " ¼ " .................. | 9-¼ dirhems and 1 kharrūba |
| Total | 65 dirhems |

Kharrūba denotes here 1/16 dirhem (cf. also Sauvaire, quoted by Grohmann, *Einführung*, p. 143.

59. TS 10 J 28, f. 13. Fustat, October, 1194–July, 1199. 1:40.

A *qā'a*, or ground floor, in a house "belonging to the poor," was rented as from Oct., 1194, for the duration of two years at a total rent of 160 dirhems, which makes 80 dirhems a year. As the entries on the reverse side show, the rent was continued until Shawwāl A.H. (5)95, July, 1199, and each year 2 dinars were paid by the tenant. The money was used for repairs made in other buildings belonging to pious foundations. This presupposes an exchange rate of 1:40.

60. TS 20.44 Ed., see Shaked, *Bibliography*, p. 73.[11] February-March, 1223. 1:40.

Auction of books of a physician and scholar after his death. Prices are given in dinars or their fractions, 'ayn, or in dirhems, called indiscriminately waraq, dirham waraq, or simply dirham. In two cases (col. II, ll. 24–26), the sums of 4-¾ and 3 dinars, respectively, are qualified by the remark: *ṣarf* 40.

One is tempted to surmise that the actual rate of exchange was lower, say: 1:36, and that a higher one was stipulated in these two cases, because a longer delay of payment was granted to those two buyers than was usual. No remark to this effect is made, however, and one has to bear in mind that the scribes of the Geniza documents usually were not very methodical. It may well be that while jotting down the two items concerned someone remarked that it was necessary to define the value of the dinar. The copyist noted the rate of exchange twice and then stopped doing so.

61. TS NS J 30. Minyat Ziftā Jawād in Lower Egypt, March 1232. 1:40.

A claim is brought before the rabbinical court (headed by one Gamliel, cf. Acts 5:34 and 22:3) "to hand over immediately 35 dinars, the amount of which in low silver coins is 1,400 dirhems," *bi-taslīm 35 dīnār mablaghhā waraq alf wa-arba' mi'a dirham*. Before, the claimant had agreed to monthly installments of 1-½ dinars.

The following four examples do not allow definite conclusions as to the relationship of the gold and silver values mentioned in them. The passages are quoted here because they presuppose a generally accepted rate of exchange at the time of their writing.

62. Bodl. MS Heb. d 61, f. 9 (Cat. 2859 no. 3*a*). Fustat, March 27, 1100.

Joseph, the son of Joseph, the milkman, labbān, receives from the "money of the poor" 1 dinar as loan, to be paid back in weekly installments of 2 dirhems. A term is set for the beginning of the repayment, but not for its end.

The document is written and signed[12] by Isaac b. Samuel, the Sefaradi (the Andalusian), an outstanding judge and scholar, and two other competent persons, and utmost care was taken with money destined for the poor. Therefore, the absence of a term for the end of the payments is an indication of the existence of a fixed relationship between gold and silver around 1100.

63. TS 13 J 3, f. 23. Bilbays in Lower Egypt, September, 1215.

A Maghrebi living in this provincial town claims from his fiancée after the dissolution of the engagement a sum of over 4 dinars which he allegedly had spent on her in cash and food. She is prepared to swear that she had received not more than 48 dirhems. After the intervention of "righteous elders" a settlement is reached in which she agrees to acknowledge a debt of 58 dirhems.

It would be erroneous to conclude that 58 dirhems corresponded to anything near the original claim of over 4 dinars. The parties in a lawsuit occasionally made ridiculously exaggerated claims and were not ashamed to settle finally with a small fraction of the sum they demanded first.

64. TS NS J 412. Fustat, August 18, 1217. 1:40?

A divorcée renounces 5 out of 15 dinars that her former husband owed her on the basis of their marriage contract. She receives from him 1 dinar in cash, while the remaining 9 were to be paid in weekly installments of 3 dirhems as from Dec. 30, 1217. No date is set for the termination of these payments.

In addition, she receives "for his children" 5-¼ dirhems per week for the duration of one year, as from the Jewish New Year, which began on Sept. 4, 1217, about two weeks after that settlement.

Clearly, the 1 dinar received had to cover the divorcée's maintenance between the date of the settlement and the day when the weekly installments were to begin, a period of 19 weeks and one or two days. The amount of 5-¼ for the children (in the plural, and not in the dual, as would have been said in case two children were involved) must mean that there were three children and that 1-¾ dirhems were earmarked for each per week. The supposition was that 2 dirhems per week were the absolute minimum, the lowest alimony known otherwise from this period being half a dirhem per day, but that in view of three children living together a "reduction" was granted to the father. Similar cases are known from this period. It appears that the mother, in acknowledgment of the advance payment of 1 dinar for a period of about twenty weeks, also contented herself for this period with the weekly minimum of two dirhems. This would again reflect a rate of exchange of 1:40.

If this assumption is correct, the payment of 9 dinars in installments of 3 dirhems per week would require about two years. For people who live on 1-¾–3 dirhems a week, even a slight fluctuation in the value of the money during such a long period would have been of considerable impact. Under such circumstances, the absence of the stipulation how many installments were to be paid is rather remarkable. Normally, in contracts allowing for

installments, either the number of installments or their termination or both is indicated. The settlement was not made in a court, but by a notary. Still, his handwriting is orderly, the legal terms are properly used, and he states that all the formalities required by the law had been attended to and even notes the name of the witness who testified together with him, a matter of precaution omitted by many notaries in the entries in their books.

65. BM, MS Or 10 126. Bilbays, September, 1239.

A merchant had contracted a commenda, qirāḍ, with a Maghrebi (not identical with the one referred to in sec. 63) before both a Muslim and a Jewish court. This had been converted into a loan for which a fixed interest of 20 dirhems per month was stipulated. Both the Arabic term *ribā'* and the Hebrew ribbīth are used, as well as *fā'ida muta'ayyin(a)*, "fixed profit." When the debtor finally proved to be unable to pay, he was forced to sell his house to the creditor for 36 dinars, but was granted the right to buy it back in the course of twelve years. The court session of Sept., 1239, dealt with a side issue: the statement that there remained no claim against the Maghrebi except for some of the interest that he had not yet paid.[13]

The 36 dinars must have represented the whole debt and perhaps even part of the interest due, for otherwise there would have been no need for the settlement of September, 1239. Assuming that the debt was 36 dinars and the exchange rate again 1:40, the yearly interest stipulated would have been 6 dinars per year or 16-⅔ percent. Since among the thousands of Geniza documents not a single other one has been found in which a fixed interest is stipulated to a Jew, the feasibility of this assumption cannot be checked by comparison with other Geniza material.

For the first half of the thirteenth century, dated documents for practically every year have been preserved in the Geniza and for most years several documents. Only in exceptional cases, however, is reference made to the rate of exchange between gold and silver coins (cf. secs. 60 and 61). Most of the transactions of smaller or middle size were made in dirhems. The sums are normally indicated with the phrase: *min al-waraq al-jayyid al-miṣrī al-muta'āmal bih waraq jayyidan* (thus in sec. 66) or *al-darāhim al-muta'āmal bihā bil-diyār al-miṣriyya allatī hī naqd miṣr*, "the dirhems that are in use in the land of Egypt, which is the Egyptian currency," or similar phrases. These expressions are old, but appear regularly and extensively only in this period and one wonders whether they do not emphasize that the official character of the means of payment, but not its content of silver, guarantees its value. We note at random five cases, indicating the sums involved and the topic of the document referred to.

(Presumably Ayyubid dirhems, for the most part struck in Syria. M.)

66. TS 13 J 3, f. 19. Fustat, January 1, 1207.

A partnership, or rather a commenda, for the duration of six-and-a-half months for the conduct of a druggist's business between Cairo and Fustat. One partner pays in 1,000 dirhems and the other one ("the agent") 100.

67. TS 13 J 3, f. 21. Fustat, 1210.

Acknowledgment of a debt of 552 dirhems by a silk-weaver, to be paid back in three monthly installments of 10 dirhems and the rest in installments of 20 dirhems.

68. TS 13 J 4, f. 1. Minyat Ghamr in Lower Egypt, spring, 1226.

Loan of 50 dirhems to be paid back in four half-monthly installments.

69. TS 13 J 4, f. 4, verso. Fustat, spring, 1229.

Rent of half a house with a garden for 600 dirhems in two years. By the end of each month 25 dirhems are due, of which the tenant retains 5 dirhems each month for expenses on watering the garden.

70. TS 8 J 6, f. 9*v*. Fustat, July, 1231.

A loan of 215 dirhems, to be paid back in one lump after the lapse of twelve months. (The document says: twelve months, and not: one year, because that particular year was a Jewish leap year, which has thirteen months).

It is even more noteworthy that the so-called "cut-up" dirhems, fractions of dirhams cut up in irregular shapes, are invariably mentioned in contracts without their equivalent in gold. They are always introduced with the formula *al-darāhim al-mutaqaṭṭiʿa al-mutaʿāmal bihā bil-diyār al-miṣriyya*, "the cut up dirhems which are legal tender in Egypt." This fact confirms the correctness of Paul Balog's assumption that these dirhems *découpés* were official emissions (cf. Paul Balog, "Études numismatiques de l'Égypte musulmane," *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte* 33 [1952], especially pp. 28 and 33).

In another study, "Notes on some Fatimid Round-flan Dirhems," *Numismatic Chronicle*, XVIIth ser. I (1961), 176, Balog has shown that "cut-up" dirhems represented the normal silver currency in Egypt even in late Fatimid times—a fact not reflected in Geniza documents.

The examples noted thus far are all from the time of Sultan al-Kāmil (ascended the throne in 1218) and prior to his reform of the coinage in November, 1225.

71. TS 18 J 1, f. 29. Fustat, spring, 1220.[14]

Acknowledgment of a debt of 815 cut-up dirhems, 660 of which had already been acknowledged in a document made by a Muslim notary. To be paid at any time demanded since it was *dayn ḥāll*, a debt already due.

72. ULC Or 1080 J 239. Fustat, spring, 1220.

A loan of 480 cut-up dirhems, subsequently augmented to 500. The debtor gives as security his share in two shops with an upper story which he owned in partnership with a Christian (he possessed two-thirds of that property and the Christian one-third). The date of the original document is torn away. Since the additional 20 dirhems were granted on May 4, 1220, while the whole sum was already due on June 3, 1220, it stands to reason that the whole loan was granted only for a very short period.

73. TS 10 J 26, f. 5. Bilbays and Ashmūm Ṭanāḥ, Lower Egypt, spring, 1224.

Sale in Bilbays of half a site (*sāḥa*) with walls (*jidrān*) in the village Ashmūm Ṭanāḥ for 40 cut-up dirhems.

74. TS 16.200. Fustat and Cairo, 1225.

A physician grants a loan of 400 cut-up dirhems to a simsār, or broker, active in Fustat and Cairo, to be paid back on Oct. 3, 1225.

After our doctor received his cut-up dirhems back in Oct., 1225, he must have been disappointed to see them taken out of circulation the following month in the wake of al-Kāmil's reform.

About Kāmili money these details have been found thus far in the Geniza.

75. TS NS Box 321, f. 79. Shortly after 1225.

A loan granted to a community official for public expenses such as dues on the import of myrtles into Fustat (used at the Feast of Tabernacles). Unfortunately, only a fragment has been preserved, the top, bottom, and right side of the document having been torn away. With regard to the money, the following details can still be read:

L. 5: (. . .) *min al-fulūs al-jiyād al-kāmiliyya al-muta'āmal bihim* (*sic*) *al-'ān*

L. 6: (. . .) *dirhaman wa-dhālika 'an tis'a darāhim nāṣiriyya wa-ma'ahā*

L. 7: (. . .*mā*) *wazanahu maks li-marāsin miṣr*

L. 8: (. . .*i*) *thnayn wa-sittīn dirhaman.*

"Excellent Kāmiliyya coins which are now legal tender . . . [a sum of more than 10] dirhems, being the equivalent of 9 Nāṣiriyya dirhems. In addition to this, [the sum] he paid for the customs dues for the myrtles for Fustat—62 dirhems."

It is a well-known fact that the Kāmili dirhems continued to circulate in Mamluk times (cf. Balog, "History of the Dirhem," pp. 133–134). This is confirmed by some Geniza documents.

76. TS 16.355. Fustat, spring, 1261.

A woman sells one-quarter of a house for 300 Kāmilī dirhems, *min al-darāhim al-nuqra al-kāmiliyya.* Another fragment, put under the same glass as being a part of the same document, and which speaks also about a sale of a quarter of a house, but for dinars, not for dirhems, has nothing to do with our document. Scrutiny of the second fragment proves it was united with the one discussed here erroneously.

77. Mosseri A 18. January, 1268.

A divorcée agrees to accept 30 instead of 70 Kāmili dirhems due her, whereas her former husband forgoes claims that he had against her.

It seems practicable to add here a few other dated documents from Mamluk times concerning the exchange rate of gold and silver. For after 1265 the Geniza material becomes comparatively sparse and for the fourteenth century a special study based on it is hardly possible.

78. TS 6 J 1, f. 23. Fustat, June 27, 1280. 1:13-⅓.

Sale of an Abyssinian slave girl with a white spot on her left eye for 266-½ nuqra (dirhems).

The strange price finds its explanation in the usage of the Geniza courts attested between 1280 and 1379 (see the following sections) to evaluate 1 dinar as 13-⅓ dirhems. 266-½:13-⅓ = 20 dinars, the usual price for a slave girl (see p. 139, above).

79. TS NS J 297. Fustat, November 14, 1289. 1:20.

The second installment due a wife according to her marriage contract was fixed at 20 dinars, being 400 dirhem nuqra.

This is in accordance with the data in literary sources for this period, see Balog, "History of the Dirhem," pp. 133 ff.

On the other hand, the very fact that it was necessary to fix the rate of exchange of the dinar seems to indicate that fluctuations were common in those days (see Balog, *op. cit.*).

80. Mosseri V 8. Ed., see Shaked, *Bibliography*, p. 246.
Fustat, September, 1301. 1:13-⅓.

A marriage contract. Concerning the estimate of the value of the dowry it is said expressly that each dinar was worth 13-⅓ zūz (silver coin, Heb.).

81. TS 12.39. Minyat Ghamr in Lower Egypt, 1315-1316. 1:13-⅓.

Fragment of a marriage contract. Ll. 15–16: "Each dinar is worth 13-⅓ dirhem nuqra."

82. TS 16.206. Fustat, *ca.* 1337. 1:13-⅓.

Fragment of another marriage contract, written in the same hand as TS 13 J 2, f. 18, which is dated Nov., 1337. L. 12: "Each dinar is worth 13-⅓ *kesāfīm levānīm*" (Heb., "white silver pieces," as opposed to *dirham aswad*).

83. TS 24.8 Fustat, same period as preceding item. 1:13-⅓.

Huge, and almost complete, marriage contract, but the date is not preserved. One of the signatories of sec. 82 signs here too. In l. 23, in addition to the definition of the dinar as in sec. 82, the following remark is added: *mimmaṭbe'a zemān ze,* "of the currency of this time."

84. TS 13 J 4, f. 15. Fustat, November 3, 1379. 1:13-⅓.

Engagement contract: *ṣarf 13-⅓ bi-dīnār.*

85. TS Arabic Box 54, f. 93. Fustat, *ca.* 1034. 1:25.

A letter, sent from Fustat to Qūṣ in Upper Egypt to the merchant Elazar b. Samuel, known from a document signed by him in 1034 (TS 13 J 1, f. 8). Abū Naṣr al-Tustari (see sec. 13) is also referred to.

Margin, ll. 2–3: *"wal-fiḍḍa al-nuqra taswā 25 dirham bi-dīnār wal-maksūr 'alā qadr mā fīh min al-nuqra."* "The nuqra silver is worth 25 dirhems for 1 dinar and the broken ones are valued in proportion to the nuqra (i.e., pure silver) that they contain."

86. TS Arabic Box 54, f. 15 *. Fustat, *ca.* 1060. 1:36.

Bank account by Nahray b. Nissīm, col. II, l. 10: for 5 waraq dirhems ⅛ dinar and 1 ḥabba (i.e., 10/72 dinar; 7.2 × 5 = 36).

87. TS Arabic 30, f. 32 *, Fustat, *ca.* 1060. 1:31-¼–31-½

Account of a fledgling banker, col. Ic, l. 2: Exchange rate 31-¼. This was on a Wednesday. On the following Sunday, in a part of the manuscript not translated in *Med. People,* the rate was 31-½.

88. TS 13 J 19, f. 9, Alexandria, 1050-1051 or 1083-1084. 1:30.

The letter is dated both according to the Muslim and the Jewish months (*mustahall Rajab* and *li-yawmayn khalawna min Kislev,* here, *mustahall* might perhaps be translated as "beginning of" [and not: the first]). The two months coincided in 1050-1051 and 1083-1084. In view of many details mentioned in the letter I prefer the latter date. But, thus far, I am unable to provide a definite proof for my preference.

Faraḥ b. Isma'īl b. Faraḥ, Alexandria, asks his father in Fustat to send him dirhems for 20 dinars and Syrian (*shām*) or Damascus dinars for 30 dinars. He adds: "The exchange rate here is 30."

89. TS Arabic 30, f. 215 *, Fustat, *ca.* 1053. Nuqra 1:17–17½.

Accounts by Nahray about two-and-a-half years after his marriage. In col. I, l. 15, the rate is given as 17, in col. II, l. 7, as 17-½. The actual sales in col. I, ll. 3 and 5, were slightly below 17. The writer uses indiscriminately the terms *fiḍḍat dhahab* (col. I, l. 3), and *nuqra* (col. II, l. 6).

90. TS 13 J 27, f. 4. Alexandria, *ca.* 1120 Nuqra 1:12.

Letter by Isaac Nīsābūrī, much of whose correspondence has survived. L. 29: *wal-fiḍḍa* 8-½ *al-mi'a,* "hundred pieces of silver cost 8-½ dinars."

91. Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 46. September 11, 1296. 1:13-⅓.

A marriage contract. The value of the items of the trousseau is indicated in dinars defined as worth 13-⅓ "white silver pieces," as above, sec. 82. The bridal gift was worth 40 dinars.

92. Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 18 1:29

In this account for Ibn 'Awkal, written around 1030, 31-⅛ dinars, 10-½ qīrāṭs and 12-⅝ dirhems are added up to a total of 32 dinars. Since a dinar has 24 qīrāṭs, this equation results: 24 − (3 + 10-½) qīrāṭs = 10-½ qīrāṭs = 12-⅝ dirhems. Thus, arithmetically, 1 dinar contains 28-⅞ dirhems.

Before trying to draw conclusions from the sources presented above, a word must be said about the terms current in them. The most important fact emanating from an undoubtable mass of evidence is the use of the word *dirham* in the general sense of a *low-value* silver coin. Full silver coins are called either (*dirham*) *nuqra* (cf. secs. 28 and 49; also secs. 76, 78, 79 and 81), or *fiḍḍa*, "silver" (cf. secs. 5 and 30, and also sec. 6, or fiḍḍa nuqra, see below). In a letter by Nahray b. Nissīm the word has the same meaning: 17 *fiḍḍa* are worth one dinar (cf. the almost identical rate in sec. 5).[15]

The following passage from the letter TS 12.288, which was written around 1070, is a telling example of the use of the term *darāhim* in the specific sense of low-value silver coins. L. 11: *wajadnā fīhā mi'atayn wa-sittīn dirham fiḍḍa nuqra wa-khamsa wa-arba'īn dirham wa-niṣf darāhim.* "We found in it [in the *ṣurra,* purse] 260 dirhem of *nuqra* silver and 45-½ '*darāhim* dirhems."

The term "waraq" for low-value silver coins, so frequent in the Ayyubid period (cf. above pp. 384 ff.), rarely appears in Fatimid documents (cf. sec. 16 B or the following passage from a letter written about 1100: "I had sent you 1 dinar and 50 dirham waraq. I am sending you now 4 new dinars and 20 dirham waraq."[16]) Likewise, the term "black dirhem" is repeatedly found only in Ayyubid times, for example, in a court record of 1214, in which a debt of 76-¼ dirhems *min al-waraq al-muta'āmal bih fi 'l-diyār al-miṣriyya darāhim sawād* is acknowledged, to be paid back in weekly installments of 10 dirhems,[17] or when a schoolmaster grants in 1224 a loan of 200 *kesāfīm sheḥōrīm* ("black silver pieces," Heb.), to be returned in five monthly installments of 40 dirhems.[18] From Fatimid times, thus far only one example has been noted, approximately from the year 1060, when a scribe from Old Cairo informed his colleague and partner that he had received as a fee "two black dirhems (*dirhamayn sūd*) which I sold for 1 dirhem."[19] Most likely, "black dirhems" designate here a coin, about a hundred pieces of which were worth 1 dinar, while the regular low-value dirhem had a rate of exchange of about fifty (cf. above, secs. 9 and 48 with secs. 38–44).

The reason for the rarity of the terms "waraq" and "dirham aswad" in documents from the Fatimid period is to be sought in the use of dirhem in the general sense of a low-value silver coin. As such it designated both the regular dirhems whose fineness was about one-third of the nuqra and the local emissions which must have consisted almost exclusively of copper or other base metals. It is strange, at first sight, that in one and the same letter the term was used indiscriminately for both types (cf. secs. 15 and 27, as well as sec. 26, where no definition of the dirhem concerned is provided). The reason for this lack of precision obviously was the fact that the difference in the value of these two types of coins was so evident that there could be no doubt as to which of them was intended. In sec. 15, D, local emissions are called *waraq ghayr muthmina,* cheap silver money.

The relationship between the full- and low-value silver coins was by no means stable. Sec. 24 contains a remark to the effect that around the middle of the eleventh century, the 'iyār in the Tunisian town of Sfax "again was 3," that is, that again 3 low-value dirhems were accepted for one full silver coin. We hear about a similar fluctuation in Egypt approximately at the same time: "They gave me 7 dinars in silver at a rate of 3-½, while the rate was 4."[20] The reference is, of course, to the rate of exchange not of silver and gold, but low- and full-value silver.

Silver ingot is called *ḥajar fiḍḍa,* "silver stone," or *ḥajar nuqra,* the latter

occurring in a court record written in Fustat around 1100, when 13 *ḥajar nuqra* weighing 2,900 dirhems were sent in four packages (*ḍabābīr*) from that city to the West.[21] The former is frequently to be found in Nahray's correspondence. Silver ingot was traded together with silver ornaments.[22]

The following table summarizes the rates of exchange discussed above. In the cases where the rate is given explicitly—they form by far the majority—the numbers of the sections concerned are printed in roman type. Where the rate has been found by calculation, the relevant section numbers are italicized. An asterisk after a number indicates that the document referred to contains an opinion about the rate of exchange mentioned. A question mark after a number means there were doubts concerning the interpretation of a document.

THE RATES OF EXCHANGE BETWEEN GOLD AND SILVER MENTIONED IN THIS APPENDIX
(*Maghrebi and other local emissions excluded*)

| *Number of dirhems contained in 1 dinar* | *Section number* | *Number of dirhems contained in 1 dinar* | *Section number* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11-7/16 | 30 | 37-½ | 58 * |
| 12 | 4?, 90 | 37-⅔ | *2* |
| 12-½ | 49 * | 38 | 9 * |
| 13-⅓ | 78, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 91 | 38-½ | *45* |
| 16-⅚–17 | 5 *, 24?, 89 (see p. 388) | 38-¾–39-¼ | *10* |
| 20 | 29?, 79 | 40 | 9*, 16, *17*, *18*, 19, 20, 22, 47, 56, *57*, *59*, 60, 61, *64?* |
| 22 | 28 * | | |
| 24 | *3* | 40-½ | 8 |
| 25 | 29?, 85 | 40.57 | *21* |
| 27 | 6 * | 42 | 55 |
| 29 | 92 | | |
| 30 | *1*, 88 | 42–43 | 37 |
| 31-¼–31-½ | 87 | | |
| 32 | 12 | 43 | *46* |
| 33 | 55, end? | 44 | 36 |
| 33-⅓ | 11, *13* | 45 | *14* |
| 33-½ | 7 * | 46.2 | *43* |
| 34 | *53* | 49 | 38 * |
| 34-⅓ | 54 * | 50 | 39, 41 *, *44* |
| 35 | 32, 51 * | 60–62-½ | 42 |
| 35-⅔ | 52 | | |
| 36 | *31*, 34 *, 86 | | |
| 36-½ | 35 * | | |
| 37 | 33 *, 50 * | | |

For Maghrebi and other local emissions cf. secs. 9, 15, 20, 23–27, and 48.

## CONCLUSIONS

(*a*) If we exclude the rates of 13-⅓ and 20 silver pieces per dinar, which, in our documents, are confined to the Mamluk period and are discussed later, there are only three cases of around 12, four of 17, three of 20–22, and four of around 25. In the vast majority of instances, 30 or more silver coins had to be paid for 1 dinar; in other words, the dirhem in common use was not the nuqra, but the low-value coin. The pure silver coins appear as means of payment for merchants engaged in the overseas trade (cf. in particular sec. 49, where *nuqra* to the respectable amount of 140 gold dinars were bought in Alexandria for two India merchants at a time of extreme scarcity of silver). It must be emphasized, however, that even in accounts of great merchants, amounting to tens of thousands of dirhems and over a thousand dinars, the dirhem referred to is the low-value coin, not the nuqra (cf. sec. 10).

(*b*) The rate of exchange of 1:35, attested in literature for A.H. 441 (1049-1050) (cf. Balog, "History of the Dirhem," p. 122), is reflected also in the Geniza documents at certain periods of both the eleventh and the twelfth centuries. The table printed above contains eighteen instances of a rate between 32 and 37-½ dirhems per dinar.

(*c*) It seems, however, that the merchants and the judges, the two arbiters on market values, were inclined to fix 1:40 as the normal rate of exchange. While the rates between 33-⅓ and 37-½ are represented as official only by one or two examples each, 40 appears in nine instances as *ṣarf*, to which four others between 40-½ and 44 are to be added. This official *ṣarf* is attested by documents dated from 1056 through 1232.

The rate of exchange 1:40 is based on the assumptions that 1 gold dinar is worth 13-⅓ pieces of full silver (cf. here secs. 79, 80, 81–84, 91), and that 1 full silver piece has the value of 3 dirhems with low silver content (cf. above p. 388). These rates are attested in a treatise on "The Secrets of the Egyptian Mint" by Manṣūr b. Baʿra, who wrote during the reign of al-Kāmil (1218-1238) (cf. A. S. Ehrenkreutz, "The Standard of Fineness of Gold Circulating in Egypt at the Time of the Crusades," *JAOS*, 74 (1954), 163 and n. 10. The Geniza material presented here shows that these standards were applied in practice, albeit intermittently, for over two hundred years.

(*d*) A specific problem is presented by the Maghrebi dirhems struck under the Zīrīds in the eleventh century. Often they had in Egypt a lower value than the Egyptian coins and sometimes they were not accepted there as currency at all. In addition, local emissions having a rate of exchange of about 1:200 were common and exposed to serious fluctuations. In one case, we read about a devaluation from 200 to 1,600 dirhems per dinar. Such a crash seems to be feasible only in the case of a coin that had next to no metallic worth and under unspecified circumstances was suddenly taken out of circulation. It is, however, remarkable, that in one case even the trade with Europeans was made in this currency (cf. sec. 27).

(*e*) Another special case and actually lying outside the scope of this work is the coinage of the Mamluk sultans. The Geniza documents from the late Ayyubid and the Mamluk periods well illustrate two basic statements made by Paul Balog in his new book about the subject: "The earlier gold-silver bi-metallic system yielded its place to a newer system in which silver became

the standard coin."[23] And, specifically under the Mamluks: "The dirhem now became money of account only."[24] When throughout a full century the Jewish courts fixed the value of the dinar at 13-⅓ *nuqra* (cf. secs. 78, 80–84, 91), we are aware of the fact that they had in mind not a coin, but the metallic value of the silver. As shown in *JESHO,* 8 (1965), 45–46, the Muslim courts adhered to the same practice.

(*f*) To return to Fatimid times: The frequent inquiries and statements about the market rate of the dirhem, as well as the actual reports about their "sales" prove that the value of silver was constantly exposed to fluctuations. On the other hand, as between A.D. 986 and 1232, an average ratio of 1:40 is to be observed in our documents (24 cases of 30–39 and 26 of 40 and above).

(*g*) A study of the alimony granted by the courts to orphans and divorcées in different times, as well as that of the emoluments of lower public servants, seems to result in the assumption of a more or less steady value of the silver. Two cases quoted above (secs. 62 and 64) dated 1110 and 1217 respectively, indicate that the authorities concerned must have assumed the existence of a generally accepted rate of exchange between dinars and dirhems in those periods.

(*h*) In view of this long-range relative steadiness of the silver dirhem one wonders whether the lower strata of the society—as opposed to the merchants class—were much affected by the fluctuations of its market price. Remarks to the opposite effect, as in secs. 36, 38 and 41, were either confined to times when the dirhem was particularly unstable, or concerned merchants rather than people of the lower classes.

We might imagine that large sections of the population had dealings only in regular silver dirhems and had not much need for, or occasion of, changing them into gold. This is indeed a point made with great vigor by Carlo M. Cipolla with regard to medieval Italy,[25] and I was inclined to believe that this was the case also in the countries of the Fatimid empire. The picture of a society in which one class is more or less confined to the use of low-value silver money, while another is privileged to handle gold, is indeed very impressive. It seems, however, that this assumption is not borne out by the evidence of the Geniza documents, at least for the eleventh and the first half of the twelfth centuries. The marriage contracts even of the poorest people are in dinars, wretched, low-priced houses are sold in dinars, and even small loans are granted in gold pieces. In some cases, as in our sec. 2 above, the dinar served perhaps only as a money of account and that payment actually was made in silver. In most cases, however, it is expressly stated that the bridal gift, albeit small, was handed over in "complete and full-weight gold pieces";[26] even of 10 dinars, paid for one-eighth of a small house in (New) Cairo, it would be said that they were *danānīr dhahaban ʿaynan mathāqīla*,[27] and a loan of only 5 dinars, defined as "pure, full-weight, excellent and true Egyptian gold" would be taken out at a time when others received loans in low-value silver.[28] Thus it seems that gold fulfilled an important role in the daily life of the population at large, and consequently the fluctuations of the value of the dirhem must have concerned the lower middle class as much as the affluent. In this connection, attention should be drawn to TS 16.356, a contract of lease of half a house from April, 1120, where a monthly rent of 7 gold qīrāṭs is stipulated "irrespective of the ṣarf, or rate of exchange."

All in all, the material presented here seems to prove that sudden and severe changes in the rate of exchange were felt as a calamity, while local and seasonal fluctuations were observed with composure, just as today people would watch the stock market during an uneventful period.

# Notes

# *Notes*

INTRODUCTION: *The Cairo Geniza Documents as a Source of Mediterranean Social History*

[1] Sauvaget-Cahen, p. 16, provides an explanation for this defect.

[2] Gottheil-Worrell, p. xi.

[3] Gottheil-Worrell, p. xiii. When Elkan N. Adler visited the place in 1888 (see n. 11), he was told that the building would be repaired soon. In 1890, large quantities of Geniza material had already made their appearance in the bazaars and were acquired, for example, for the Bodleian Library, Oxford (A. Neubauer and A. E. Cowley, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library* [Oxford, 1906], II, xii–xvi). These facts fix the date for the great repairs that led to the complete dispersal of the contents of the Geniza. As early as summer, 1864, when Jacob Saphir (see next note) first described the Geniza chamber, he mentioned that repairs had been made in the synagogue building and that the roof of the Geniza had partly fallen in. At the time of his visit, the contents of the chamber were buried under the earth and stones removed from the synagogue during the building operations. This explains why Saphir himself, although a great connoisseur of books, was unable to find anything of value.

[4] Jacob Saphir, *Iben Safir* (Lyck, 1866), pp. 21–22 (Hebrew). Saphir provided a valuable description of the Geniza synagogue, which was later demolished.

[5] Gottheil-Worrell, Introduction, p. xii.

[6] B. Halper, *Descriptive Catalogue of Genizah Fragments in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1924). A few pieces of those catalogued by Halper are kept in the Rare Books Room of the Library of the University of Pennsylvania (e.g., no. 456).

[7] The Antonin Collection has been briefly characterized by A. Harkavy, *Report of the Imperial Public Library for the Year 1899* (St. Petersburg [Leningrad], 1903), pp. 75–87 (in Russian); also by Abraham I. Katsh, *The Antonin Genizah in the Saltykov-Schedrin* [*sic*] *Public State Library in Leningrad* (New York, 1962), included also as an article in *Leo Jung Jubilee Volume* (New York, 1962). The Geniza documents in the Leningrad collections (including Firkovitch, see below, n. 17) were examined by me in summer, 1965 (cf. my preliminary report in *Ha'aretz Literary Supplement* [in Heb.]) (Tel Aviv), Sept. 26, 1965, and my editions of texts from Leningrad in *Tarbiz*, 35 (1966), 274–277, and 36 (1967), 59–72.

[8] A first inventory of the Kaufmann Collection is included in Max Weiss, *Catalog der Hebraeischen Handschriften und Buecher aus dem Nachlasse von Professor David Kaufmann* (Budapest, 1906); cf. also S. D. Goitein

in *Epstein Jubilee Volume,* pp. 191–204, and *Genizah Publications in Memory of Prof. Dr. David Kaufmann,* ed. Samuel Loewinger and Alexander Scheiber (Budapest, 1949), esp. pp. viii–xv.

[9] A. Neubauer, "Egyptian Fragments," *JQR,* 8 (1896), 141.

[10] See in particular Wertheimer's postcard of December 5, 1893 (in Box 2 of ULC Or 1080), where he urges Schechter to send on the manuscripts offered to him to Dr. Neubauer of the Bodleian Library.

[11] Elkan N. Adler left a description of his visit to the Geniza in *JQR,* 9 (1897), 669 ff. His *Catalogue of Hebrew Manuscripts in the Collection of Elkan Nathan Adler* (Cambridge, 1921), deals with the Geniza documents only in a very general way.

[12] For a detailed account about S. Schechter's feat, see Norman Bentwich, *Solomon Schechter: A Biography* (Philadelphia, 1948), pp. 126–163.

[13] Gottheil-Worrell, Introduction, p. xiii.

[14] J. Schirmann, *New Hebrew Poems from the Genizah* (in Heb.) (Jerusalem, 1965), is mainly based on the New Series. See the review by S. D. Goitein in *JAOS,* 86 (1966), 233–234.

[15] Described by S. D. Goitein in *JQR,* 49 (1958), 35–52.

[16] B. Chapira in *REJ,* 82 (1926), 317.

[17] Paul E. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza* (New York, 1960), pp. 6–7. Kahle's book is mainly concerned with those manuscripts from the Geniza which help to establish the biblical text. A catalogue of the two Firkovitch collections is being prepared by Victor Lebedev of the State Public Library, Leningrad.

[18] In addition to (1) University Museum, Philadelphia, mentioned above (see n. 15): (2) National and University Library, Jerusalem, Israel (see A. Yellin, *Kirjath Sepher,* 2 [1926], 292–297, and S. D. Goitein, *ibid.,* 41 [1966], 263–276); (3) University Library, Heidelberg, Germany (see Albert Dietrich, *Zum Drogenhandel im Islamischen Aegypten* [Heidelberg, 1954], pp. 1–4); (4) University Library Strasbourg, France (see *Catalogue Général des manucrits des bibliothèques publiques de France,* Départments, vol. 47 [Paris, 1923], nos. 4038, 4076, 4077/8, M. Ginsburger, *REJ,* 72 [1921], 40–47, and Mann, II, 376); (5) Gaster Collection of the John Rylands Library, Manchester, England (cf., e.g., M. Wallenstein, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library,* 40 [1958], 551–558, and 41 (1959), 488–500); there is another Gaster Collection in the British Museum (cf. S. D. Goitein in *JQR,* 51 [1961], 34–46); (6) Christ College, Cambridge (two photographs of Geniza documents from the Abrahams Collection of this library were kindly put at my disposal by the late Professor I. Sonne, Cincinnati); (7) Selly Oak Colleges Library, Birmingham, England (cf. M. H. Gottstein, "Hebrew Fragments in the Mingana Collection," *Journal of Jewish Studies,* 5 [1956], 172–176); (8) Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati; (9) Institut Narodov Azii, Leningrad (see above, n. 7).

[19] Grohmann, *Einführung,* p. 36. A famous example of a document pieced together from fragments in the three libraries mentioned is the letter, in which, in 1161, the Exilarch Daniel b. Hisday of Baghdad confirmed Nethanel, the head of the Jewish Academy in Cairo, in his office. The identification of the three fragments was achieved by S. Assaf (see the discussion of the document in Mann, *Texts,* I, 230–235).

[20] David W. Amram, "Two Legal Documents of the Eleventh Century," *The Green Bag: An Entertaining Magazine for Lawyers* (Boston), 13 (1901), 115–120, and "An Injunction of a Jewish-Egyptian Court of the Thirteenth

Century," *ibid.*, pp. 339–343. The documents edited bear the numbers 335, 338, 347 in Halper's *Catalogue of Genizah Fragments;* no. 338 was reedited by Philip C. Hammond in *JQR*, 52 (1961), 131–153.

[21] An important Hungarian publication: Samuel Kandel, *Genizai kéziratok* (Budapest, 1909). About documents edited twice: A. Neubauer, *JQR*, 8 (1896), 560; S. D. Goitein, *Tarbiz*, 28 (1959), 396.

[22] See Abbreviations and Symbols (above, p. xxv), *s.v.* Shaked, *Bibliography*.

[23] *India Book* 58.

[24] S. Schechter, *Studies in Judaism* (Philadelphia, 1908), II, 6–7.

[25] The two Jewish communities of Cairo, the Rabbanites and the Karaites, possess archives that contain some very ancient documents (cf. Richard Gottheil in *A. Harkavy Jubilee Volume* [St. Petersburg, 1908], pp. 121–125 [Karaite, dated 1024]; *idem* in *JQR*, 19 [1906-1907], 467–539 [Rabbanite, dated 1034]; I. Ben Ze'eb in *Congress of Jewish Studies* [in Heb.] [Jerusalem, 1952], 435–438; *idem* in *Sefunot*, 1 [1957], 7–24).

[26] John Rylands Library, Manchester, Gaster Collection, No. A 960. The latest dated Geniza letter (not: legal document) known to me is from summer, 1887 (TS 13 J 15, f. 25).

[27] The great Karaite formulary preserved in the British Museum (MS Or 2538, fs. 86–91, ed. Mann, *Texts*, II, 189–193) is a modern copy of a fifteenth-century manuscript, and was found by a local Karaite in the Geniza in 1864, seventeen days after Jacob Saphir had visited it (cf. Mann, *Texts*, II, 192, ll. 157–163). Mann thought that the copyist referred to a Karaite Geniza. He says, however, expressly, "I found this ancient quire in THE Geniza (*al-genīza*)," which leaves no doubt as to the provenance of the manuscript.

[28] See Abbreviations and Symbols (above, p. xxiv) *s.v. Med. People*.

[29] Grohmann, *World of Arabic Papyri*, p. 2: "About 16,000 Arabic papyri; of paper, somewhat more than 33,000 pieces." Herr Fackelmann, the "Restaurator" of the exemplarily well-kept Papyrus-sammlung Erzherzog Rainer, Vienna, told me on July 14, 1965, that it contained 50,000 Arabic fragments on paper, 40,000 on papyrus, and 500 on parchment. The corresponding numbers in Grohmann, *Einführung*, are 28,094, 8,000, and 340, respectively.

[30] L. Fuks, *The Oldest Known Literary Documents of Yiddish Literature* (Leiden, 1957). The title and thesis of this book have given rise to considerable discussion on whether the language of the poems is "Hebrew-German" (German written in Hebrew characters) or "Judeo-German" that is, a kind of Old Yiddish (a German vernacular spoken solely by Jews). While the Germanists seem to choose the former alternative, the students of Yiddish prefer the latter (Max Weinreich, "Old Yiddish Poetry in Linguistic-Literary Research," *Word*, 16 [1960], 100–118).

[31] The standard edition of Moses Maimonides' *Responsa* by A. Freimann (Jerusalem, 1934) is based on ancient Hebrew translations. The Arabic originals together with a new Hebrew translation were published, in three volumes, by J. Blau (Jerusalem, 1957, 1960, 1961). Cf. S. D. Goitein, "Maimonides as Chief Justice," *JQR*, 49 (1959), 191–204. The *Responsa* of Abraham Maimonides were published by A. Freimann (Jerusalem, 1937) in collaboration with me; I established the texts of the Arabic originals and translated them into Hebrew.

Quite a number of autograph responsa of the two masters have been published and there are others that await publication. Thus, MS Bodl. Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 84, is the original of a question addressed to Abraham Mai-

monides and his autograph answer, which were rendered with omissions in the manuscript that formed the basis of the 1937 edition (*ibid.*, pp. 104–105).

As is evident from the material preserved, the procedure adhered to for the submission of queries to religious authorities was as follows: On the paper that contained the question, sufficient space was left blank for the answer. The scholar wrote his opinion with his own hand, while a scribe made a clean copy for dispatch to the person who had asked the question. This explains why some of the originals of both the questions and the answers have been preserved from the archives of the two Maimonideses, who lived in Old Cairo. For further details, see S. D. Goitein, "New Autograph Responsa of Maimonides," *Tarbiz*, 28 (1959), esp. pp. 193–194.

[32] Obadiah's autobiography is contained in several manuscripts, translated in *Med. People*, no. 4.

[33] Aramaic remained compulsory only in bills of divorce and deeds of manumission and was also used, albeit not exclusively, in the general sections of a marriage contract. Only the "Zionist" sect of the Karaites replaced Aramaic by Hebrew in all court documents and did not adopt Arabic, at least officially.

[34] S. D. Goitein in *Lĕšonénu* (Heb. with English summary), 30 (1966), 197–216.

[35] Medieval Hebrew script was able to express short *u* and *i*, as well as to indicate the Imāla, or the pronunciation of *ā* similar to *ē*. There exist long, fully voweled letters, such as TS Arabic Box 18(1), f. 113, a study of which would reveal much about the pronunciation of Arabic at the time of their writing.

[36] S. D. Goitein, "The Language of Algades, a Dialect Spoken in Lower Yemen," *Le Muséon*, 73 (1960), 351–394, where also previous studies on Yemenite dialects are registered.

[37] For research made into the Arabic vernaculars of the Geniza documents see below nn. 63, 64.

[38] A detailed study of the synagogues of Cairo was made by Richard Gottheil in *JQR*, 19 (1906–1907), 501–527.

[39] Abraham M. Luncz in *Jerusalem Yearbook* (in Heb.) (Vienna, 1882), pp. 15–16; cf. A. M. Habermann, *Ha-geniza* (in Heb.) (Jerusalem, 1944), p. 8.

[40] *Jewish Palestine Exploration Society, Yearbook*, Vol. I, sec. 2 (Jerusalem, 1925), p. 90; cf. Habermann, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

[41] E. N. Adler, *Jews in Many Lands* (Philadelphia, 1905), pp. 163–167.

[42] Alfred J. Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt* (Oxford, 1884), I, 168–170 (the location of the synagogue is indicated on the map facing p. 155); Abū Ṣāliḥ, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt, Anecdota Oxoniensia*, Vol. VII (1895), trans. B. T. A. Evetts, p. 136; Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 494 (ed. 1326 A.H., IV, 397); Mann, I, 14; Kahle, *Cairo Geniza*, pp. 3–4. (Kahle must have misread Mann who did not make the mistake attributed to him by Kahle); S. D. Goitein, "The Synagogue Building and its Furnishings," *Eretz-Israel*, 7 (1964), 172 of English summary.

[43] A marriage contract, dated Friday (not "Sunday night," as in Halper, *Catalogue of Genizah Fragments*, p. 175, no. 331), Tishri, 17, 1183 Era of the Documents (corresponding to Oct. 6, 871), seems to be genuine, as its script is of the same type as that found in the ancient Hebrew papyri. The scribe did not complete the document because he made a mistake in the date. Tishri 17 can never fall on a Friday. According to E. Mahler, *Juedische*

*Chronologie* (Leipzig, 1916), p. 550, Tishri 17-October 6 of that year was a Saturday (ed. S. D. Goitein in *Lĕšonénu*, 30 [1966], 199–200).

[44] Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 471, where to the number 336 one thousand is to be added (1336 Era of the Documents = A.D. 1025) (see *Mann*, I, 36 n. 1). The restoration was completed only around 1040.

[45] TS 12.543 *; S. D. Goitein in *Eretz-Israel*, 7 (1964), 81–90.

[46] About twenty such letters have been preserved. From one it appears that the silver ornaments of the Torah scrolls had been pawned for the payment of the poll tax (TS Box K 25, f. 190, ed. in *Eretz-Israel*, 7 [1964], 97–98 [where K 15 is erroneously printed]).

[47] *Voyage de Georges Lengherand* (Mons, 1861), p. 176, quoted in Strauss, *Mamluks*, I, 97. For the number of synagogues in Cairo around 1400 see *ibid.*, I, 237, 244.

[48] TS 13 J 4, f. 16 *, TS 8 J 6, f. 19 (cf. Worman, *JQR*, 18 [1905], 10).

[49] N. Golb, "The Topography of the Jews of Medieval Egypt," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 24 (1965), 251–270.

[50] People bearing the family names "Damascene" and "Aleppian" and naturalized in Egypt deposited many letters received by them and documents bearing their signature. Most of these writings betray no particular connection with the towns of origin of these people.

[51] Goitein, *Studies*, pp. 308–328.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 344.

[53] TS 13 J 26, f. 24, ed. in *Eretz-Israel*, 7 (1964), 88–90, and TS 13 J 27, f. 14 (drafts of letters of the cantor of the synagogue to the Gaon of Jerusalem); TS Box 25, f. 106 (an Alexandrian reports that the synagogue of the Palestinians was desolate because the Maghrebis had all left that year for Tunisia).

[54] For the eleventh century see E. Ashtor, "Documentos españoles de la Genizah," *Sefarad*, 24 (1964), 41–80; for the twelfth, S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz*, 25 (1956), 395.

[55] J. Sambari, ed. A. Neubauer, *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles* (Oxford, 1887), I, 137, cf. Mann, I, 36 n. 1. Obadiah Bartenuro reports in 1487 that service was held in the two places of worship every Saturday (quoted already by Saphir, *Iben Safir*, I, 20), A. Kahana, *Jewish Historical Literature* (in Heb.) (Warsaw, 1923), II, 43.

[56] TS 13 J 21, f. 17 *, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz*, 27 (1958), 528–535, trans. in *Speculum*, 39 (1964), 298–303.

[57] Above, p. 6; see also Norman Golb, "Sixty Years of Geniza Research," *Judaism*, 6 (1957), 3–16.

[58] Bentwich, *Solomon Schechter* (see n. 12, above), p. 162.

[59] *Genizah Studies in Memory of Doctor Solomon Schechter*, Vol. I, *Midrash and Haggada* (New York, 1928); Vol. II, *Geonic and Early Karaitic Halakah* (1929), both by Louis Ginzberg; Vol. III, *Liturgical and Secular Poetry*, by Israel Davidson (New York, 1928).

[60] The second volume, which is devoted entirely to the study of Karaism (Philadelphia, 1935), also contains much material from the Cairo Geniza.

[61] As a matter of fact, Jacob Mann began his career as original historian with a series of articles called "The Responsa of the Babylonian Geonim as a Source of Jewish History," *JQR*, n.s., 7–9 (1916-1921).

[62] A. Harkavy, *Responsen der Geonim* (Berlin, 1887).

[63] D. Z. Baneth, "The Nunation (Tanwīn) in Judaeo-Arabic Texts," (in

Heb.) *Bulletin of the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society*, 12 (1946), 141–153; Abraham Maimuni, *Responsa*, pp. xxiii–xxxvii (Linguistic Introduction, by S. D. Goitein); B. I. Joel, *Siddur R. Saadja Gaon* (Jerusalem, 1941), Linguistic Introduction, pp. 53–58; M. Goshen-Gottstein, *Syntax and Vocabulary of Mediaeval Hebrew as Influenced by Arabic* (mimeographed in Heb.) (Jerusalem, 1951).

[64] J. Blau, *A Grammar of Mediaeval Judaeo-Arabic* (Heb. with detailed Eng. Table of Contents) (Jerusalem, 1961); reviewed by S. D. Goitein, *ZDMG*, 114 (1964), 187–190, L. Kopf, *Kirjath Sepher*, 38 (1963), 446–449; J. Blau, *The Emergence and Linguistic Background of Judaeo-Arabic: A Study of the Origins of Middle Arabic* (Oxford, 1965). For other studies of Blau relevant to the language of the Geniza texts see Shaked, *Bibliography*, pp. 271–272, 353.

[65] A. Miquel, "L'Europe occidentale dans la relation arabe d'Ibrāhīm b. Ya'qūb," *Annales–Economies–Sociétés: Civilisations*, 21 (1966), 1048–1064, where further literature is indicated. See also Ashtor, *Jews in Muslim Spain*, I, 305–306.

## CHAPTER I: *The Mediterranean Scene During the High Middle Ages (969–1250)*

### 1. HISTORICAL SURVEY

[1] See above, p. 19.

[2] People originating from the following towns and districts in Iran and Central Asia have been noted thus far in the Geniza records, mostly of the first half of the eleventh century: Āmul, Ahwāz, Arrajān, Barzanj, Dāmghān, Hamadhān, Hormshīr, Ḥulwān, Kāzerūn, Khorāsān, Kirmān, Marāgha, Nihāwand, Nīshāpūr (Nīsābūr), Qūmis, Samarqand, Shīrāz, Sinān, Sīrāf, Sīrjān, Tawwaz, Ṭūs, Tustar, Urmiya.

These names have been noted at random. No special research has been made for the purpose. See also the family name al-'Ajamī, "the Persian." However, Fārisī (written with or without alef) usually designates textiles coming from Fārs, the southwestern district of Persia. In one document, TS 28.17, l. 43, it must be the equivalent of "business agent," as it is mentioned between *ṣayārifī*, banker, and *wakīl*, representative of merchants. Of Iranian personal names, borne mostly by persons living in the tenth century and partly serving also as family names, the following may be mentioned: Bābād, Babshād and Bafshād, Bakhtaway, Khodādād, Khoshnām, Kujik, Rozbih, Shāhīn, Shahryār, Yazdād.

[3] See above, p. 18.

[4] As private citizen, e.g., ULC Or 1081 J 18, l. 2, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Eretz-Israel*, 6 (1960), 167. The name is also spelled Kitāma and Kutāma.

[5] The Arabic term Ṣaqlabī (spelled in different ways) practically designates any European outside the Byzantine and Frankish empires. About "Slavs" in Fatimid service see M. Canard, *Vie de l'Ustādh Jaudhar* (Algiers, 1958), p. 15.

[6] TS NS J 24*v*, l. 3 (around 1100).

[7] Goitein, *Studies*, pp. 308–328, chap. xvi, "Medieval Tunisia, the Hub of the Mediterranean."

[8] Fischel, *Jews*, pp. 45–68.
[9] Mann, I, 32; Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd, *Patrologia Orientalis* (Paris, 1918), p. 206, quoted by Mez, *Renaissance*, chap. 2, p. 13.
[10] Mann, II, 273; Bodl. MS Heb. b 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 7, ll. 19–21, ed. in *Zion*, 17 (1952), 145 *.
[11] *EI* [2], *s.v.* Crusades (C. Cahen); S. D. Goitein, "New Sources on Palestine in Crusader Days," *Eretz-Israel*, 4 (1956), 147–156; *idem* in *Speculum*, 39 (1964), 743–745.
[12] P. 61, above; E. Ashtor-Strauss, "Saladin and the Jews," *HUCA*, 27 (1956), 305–326.
[13] *EI* [2], *s.v.* Baḥriyya, sec. ii (D. Ayalon); D. Ayalon, *The Mamluks and Naval Power* (Jerusalem, 1965).
[14] TS 13 J 21, f. 17+*; TS Arabic Box 53, f. 37, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Sefunot*, 11 (1967); Zvi Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium* (New York, 1959), p. 328 n. 72.
[15] P. 301, above.

## 2. INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

[1] *EI* [2], *s.v.* Baḥr al-Rūm (D. M. Dunlop).
[2] TS 20.80, ll. 21–28, 39–40, *India Book* 273.
[3] TS 8 J 5, f. 14*d*, *India Book* 270.
[4] P. 302, above.
[5] TS Box 28, f. 240.
[6] *Nahray, passim.* Maimonides uses the fact that Jewish scholars in the course of about 150 years traveled regularly between Seville and Alexandria as an argument with regard to the question, whether Jews were permitted to travel on rivers on Saturdays (Seville, although a great seaport, is situated about sixty miles upstream) (Maimonides, *Responsa*, II, 576).
[7] TS NS J 3, l. 14.
[8] TS 12.392, *India Book* 173.
[9] *Mashriq* or *diyār al-mashriq* (e.g., TS 20.187). In a letter from Zawīlat al-Mahdiyya, Tunisia, written around 1063, we read: *"diyār al-mashriq, ya-'nī al-iskandariyya wal-miṣr,"* "the eastern regions, namely, Alexandria and Old Cairo" (Bodl. MS Heb. c28 [Cat. 2876], f. 11, l. 7).
[10] L. Ginzberg, "Geonic Responsa," *JQR*, 18 (1906), 428.
[11] TS 24.49*v*, l. 2.
[12] ULC Or 1080 J 14, l. 12, *Nahray* 189.
[13] Philadelphia, University Museum E. 16522, cf. S. D. Goitein in *JQR*, 49 (1958), 51.
[14] TS Box 20, f. 153.
[15] TS 13 J 17, f. 2, l. 27, *Nahray* 76.
[16] TS 12.693*v*, ll. 9–16.
[17] Date palm fiber, Ar. *līf*. TS 10 J 16, f. 2, l. 18, *Nahray* 123. Most probably this material was imported from Yemen (see Muqaddasī, p. 98), since the writer of this letter was connected with the Indian trade (see *India Book* 45, 217, 217*a*). Coir, or coconut palm fiber, has a different name in Arabic.
[18] DK XV, ll. 9–10. Odoriferous wood: *'ūd*.
[19] Bodl. MS Heb. b 12 (Cat. 2875), fs. 6 and 29, ed. S. Assaf, *Tarbiz*, 9 (1938), 203, l. 12 *.

[20] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805) f. 18*v*, l. 3, *Nahray* 44.

[21] TS 12.229, l. 5.

[22] TS 13 J 19, f. 27, ll. 18–19, *Nahray* 14; TS 16.339*v*, l. 7⁺; TS 13 J 18, f. 8, l. 13; TS 20.69, l. 14; TS 16.163 *.

[23] TS 13 J 33, f. 1, *India Book* 85.

[24] Bodl. MS Heb. b 3 (Cat. 2806), f. 26, *India Book* 193.

[25] Brazilwood, Ar. *baqqam.* Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 11, ll. 11–13.

[26] Gottheil-Worrell XXXIII, p. 152, l. 22. The reader will not find the quotation given here in the English translation accompanying the edition of the original. The editors misread the text. As the facsimile accompanying the edition clearly shows, the words in question read: *whwn* [= *wahōn,* "and here," colloquial] *qwm rwm n'rḏh,* instead of the printed: *whyk qwm dyn'* (?) *w'rḏt.* Another case of alum sold to Rūm: TS NS J 137.

[27] DK I, l. 25, *Nahray* 167.

[28] Dropsie 389*v*, l. 6 ff.

[29] BM Or 5542, f. 27, ll. 10–13, *Nahray* 89.

[30] 956: Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 27, l. 17, ed. S. Assaf, *Tarbiz,* 9 (1938), pp. 26–27. 1040: TS 24.80. 1050: TS 20.7, l. 11. 1067: Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 38. 1115: TS 24.3. In TS 12.12, l. 10 (date not preserved), the bride gets five Rūm *mandīl*'s.

[31] 1031: TS 13 J 17, f. 14, l. 10. 1034: TS 24.12. 1050: TS 20.7, l. 13. 1064: TS 24.13. 1155: TS 20.8. For more details about Rūm textiles and furniture, see *Med. Soc.*, Vol. III, chap. viii.

[32] Timber from Amalfi and Genoa: TS Arabic Box 38, f. 138, ed. S. M. Stern in *Levi Della Vida Jubilee Volume* (Rome, 1956), II, 532–533. The Genoese name *Snywn* (the reading was doubted by the editor) appears in other Geniza papers, e.g., BM Or 5566C, f. 9*b*, l. 1, ed. Braslavsky, *Our Country,* p. 80, first word on the facsimile facing p. 97. The name seems to be identical with *Snywr* in other lists; thus *Senyōn* is perhaps an Arabism for *Senior,* and the name referred to would be Bon Senior. Timber sent from Venice: p. 301, above.

[33] Syracuse, 1241: TS 12.620. Messina, 1243: 13 J 4, f. 8. Twelfth century: *India Book* 273 and *passim.* Rūm cheese in general: JNUL f. 7*v*, l. 12, and often. Honey: TS 8 J 20, f. 2*v*, l. 5. Wine: TS 24.78, margin and verso, l. 4 *, ed. S. D. Goitein in *H. A. R. Gibb Presentation Volume* (Leiden, 1965), pp. 270–284.

[34] TS 13 J 22, f. 30*v*, l. 15.

[35] *India Book* 2, l. 15 and *passim.* Cf. Franz Rosenthal, "An Ancient Commentary on the Hippocratic Oath," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine,* 30 (1956), 58. Other medical plants coming from Rūm (in this case the Asian provinces of Byzantium) in TS 13 J 21, f. 17⁺ *.

[36] TS NS J 137; TS 20.177.

[37] Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 18, l. 19.

[38] Cf. *Tarbiz,* 24 (1955), 139 ff., and JNUL f. 7, l. 17.

[39] TS 18 J 4, f. 5, l. 21, ed. Mann, II, 40; TS 20.6, ed. S. Assaf, *Tarbiz,* 9 (1938), 30; H. Z. Hirschberg, *R. Nissīm b. Jacob . . .* (in Heb.) (Jerusalem, 1954), p. 33.

[40] *India Book* chap. ii.

[41] Tyre-Fustat: Mosseri A 2, ed. Mann, HUCA, 3 (1926), 281–283; TS 13 J 25, f. 20, ed. S. Assaf, *Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem, 1953), pp. 106–107. Damascus-Fustat: DK VIII.

[42] TS 12.175 *.

[43] "Qui va loin se marier, sera trompé ou veut tromper" ("He who takes a wife from far away, either fools himself or others"). For the Arabic versions see Goitein, *Jemenica*, p. 156, nos. 1185 and 1186. For the Hebrew and Aramaic, see, e.g., K. A. Perla, *Otzar* (in Heb.) (Warsaw, 1900), nos. 1052 and 2883.

[44] Marrying immediately before setting out on a voyage overseas: Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 17*v*, l. 5. Fetching the wife: Dropsie 389*v*, l. 37. Bill of divorce sent from Egypt to Bāghāy, a place in eastern Algeria, to a woman wed, but not led home: ULC Or 1080 J 6, l. 15.

[45] TS 24.77.

[46] Nahray b. Nissīm: *Nahray, passim*. Judah Ibn Sighmār: TS 16.179 *. Zachariah b. Tammām: Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 17 *. Tiberias: TS NS J 172. 'Ammān: MS Chapira, ed. B. Chapira, *Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem, 1953), p. 121. Samaw'al: ed. Moshe Perlmann in *PAAJR*, 32 (1964), 75.

[47] TS 20.122, ll. 11–12. A similar case is in the story of the young man from Egypt who married an orphan girl in Tyre (p. 54, above).

[48] Romania: Mann, I, 241. Crete: ULC Or 1081 J 35. Her Greek name was Kalī, the beautiful, most probably a translation of a former Arabic name (such as Ḥasnā). In this document, she empowers her husband to sell a house of hers in Old Cairo, which she had inherited from her brother. Thus, it is almost certain that she originated herself from Egypt. Double names: TS 13 J 3, f. 27*v* (dated 1218).

[49] TS Box K 15, f. 15, l. 12 (1107); K 15, f. 14*v*, col. I, l. 14, and K 15, f. 66, col. I, l. 11 (early eleventh century). Partnerships: see Appendix C, secs. 2, 3, 5, 8, 12.

[50] TS 13 J 25, f. 18, *Nahray* 183; Yāqūt, IV, 146. Cf. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, XV–XVI, 50, where *Ṭīlaḳān* should be replaced by *Ṭēlaḳān* (ā with Imāla). I prefer the reading Ṭālaqān, as in Yāqūt, III, 491, and *EI*[1] *s.v.*, to Ṭāliqān, as in Le Strange, *Eastern Caliphate*, p. 423.

[51] E.g., TS 10 J 5, f. 24, l. 6, *Nahray* 186.

[52] TS 8 J 22, f. 8, l. 9; Muqaddasī, p. 145, Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, X, 98.

[53] Goitein, *Studies*, pp. 239–240; Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 105. Ṭabarī Ramlī: TS NS J 390, l. 15.

[54] ULC Or 1081 J 9.

[55] TS 12.3 *; Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 19, l. 24, *India Book* 32.

[56] TS Box K 15, fs. 5 and 39 contain lists of poor Rūmīs in Fustat. Scribes from Rūm, e.g., in TS Box K 15, f. 5; TS 13 J 3, f. 27; TS 12.394; TS NS J 261.

[57] Richard Ettinghausen, *Medieval Near Eastern Ceramics in the Freer Gallery of Art* (Washington, 1960), p. 4; *idem*, "Near Eastern Book Covers and Their Influence on European Bindings," *Ars Orientalis*, 3 (1959), 113–131.

[58] TS 13 J 10 f. 5.

[59] Helen Waddell, *The Wandering Scholars* (first edition, 1932; Pelican Books, 1954).

[60] Bibliography about Joseph b. Gershom in Abraham Maimuni, *Responsa*, p. 13 n. 3. The French scholar did not die on his way to Baghdad, but, as is evident from the poem by Elazar ha-Bavlī, after his arrival there.

[61] TS 8 J 25, f. 3; TS 20.76, l. 32.

[62] Bibliographic details in Assaf, *Texts,* p. 137, in particular M. Steinschneider, *Die Arabische Literatur der Juden* (Frankfurt on Main, 1902), p. 132, para. 85. The name of the Sicilian town mentioned in the document: TS 20.9, ed. in Assaf, *Texts,* 138, therein spelled *Dmnsh,* is Demona.

[63] TS 16.301. Inter alia, he ordered the *Hidāya* of Baḥyā and the *Ḥāwī* (of Hay?). Further details about this interesting letter in Goitein, *Education,* pp. 184–185. Ed. S. D. Goitein, *Sefunot* 11 (1967).

[64] S. Assaf, *The Gaonic Period and Its Literature* (in Heb.) (Jerusalem, 1955), p. 43.

[65] TS 28.1, ed. S. Schechter in *JQR,* 11 (1899), 643–650 (at the time of which publication the MS did not yet bear a number). Revival in Old Cairo: TS 16.163 *. For further details, S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz,* 36 (1966), 63, n. 21.

[66] Isaac b. Moses: Assaf, *Texts,* p. 104. Jacob Mann's surmise that Solomon b. Judah originated from Fez: Mann I, 132 and 150, is corroborated by the document published by B. Chapira in *REJ,* 82 (1926), 328 (where Hay Gaon calls him al-Fāsī), and ULC Or 1080 J 45, l. 7 (where Ibn al-Fāsī refers either to Solomon or to his son Abraham).

[67] TS 8 J 5, f. 1 *. Abraham b. Jacob al-Der'ī: JNUL, f. 3 (1103), ed. S. D. Goitein in *Kirjath Sepher,* 41 (1966), 264–265. A letter from him (TS 20.177) shows that he was the leader of the Alexandrian community at that time.

[68] See p. 67, above.

[69] One designated as originating from Baghdad, the other, Hillel b. Eli, known as such from other sources, e.g., TS 13 J 20, f. 22 (a letter by his daughter to his son Eli).

[70] Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 6, and TS Box K 15, f. 70, ed. in Mann, II, 246–247 (at time of which publication the second text did not yet have a number). Both texts, and in particular the second, need thorough revision. The third list is contained in TS Box 28, f. 42.

[71] TS 8 J 21, f. 6, l. 13, ed. Mann, II, 110. TS Loan 35.

[72] E.g., from Palestine: in Damīra, Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 29; in Sunbāṭ, d 74 (no Cat.), f. 42: in Minyat Ashna, Mann, II, 367. From Palestine or Syria: in Minyat Ziftā, TS 24.38; in Sunbāṭ, TS 12.26 *; in Bilbays, ULC Or 1080 J 88. From Sicily: in al-Maḥalla, ULC Or 1080 J 23. From Algeria: in Ṣahrajt, TS NS J 35. A Frank: in Sammanūd, TS 13 J 26, f. 7, l. 16. These examples were chosen at random. Additional details in Goitein, *Education,* pp. 77 ff.

[73] John Rylands Library, Manchester, Gaster Collection L 213.

[74] Latest discussion of Israeli's biography in M. Plessner's review of A. Altmann and S. M. Stern, *Isaac Israeli: A Neo-Platonic Philosopher of the Early Tenth Century* (Oxford, 1958), in *Kirjath* Sepher, 35 (1960), 457–459.

[75] In Ar.: *ḥajj maqbūl, wa-dhanb maghfūr, wa-tijāra lā tabūr,* with variants.

[76] TS 18 J 3, f. 19.

[77] TS 13 J 16, f. 4, *Nahray* 53.

[78] TS 18 J 4, f. 14, ed. Assaf, *Texts,* pp. 51–52.

[79] Assaf, *Texts,* p. 106 n. 37.

[80] ULC Or 1080 J 57.

[81] ULC Or 1080 J 2 (a list of contributors, from Old Cairo, probably twelfth century); ENA 154 (2558) (a letter, dated 1158, by a man from Alexandria known as "the son of the female pilgrim," to his mother, a widow).

[82] TS 8 J 21, f. 22.

[83] *India Book* 185.

[84] Antonin 904, margin, ed. S. Assaf in *Epstein Jubilee Volume*, p. 185; Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 17 *.

[85] DK XXVIII.

[86] E.g., TS Box K 3, f. 34.

[87] TS Box K 15, f. 39.

[88] TS Box K 15, f. 15. TS Box J 1, f. 4, contains the same names, altogether thirty-eight Rūm. Perhaps this was the earliest of the four contemporary lists.

[89] TS Box K 15, f. 102. The four lists are in the hand of the scribe Hillel b. Eli (see above, n. 69), who is known from many documents dated between 1066 and 1107. A fifth list of the same type (TS Box K 15, f. 97) is signed by him. The date in TS Box K 15, f. 39, is written in such a way (*tyṭ* or *tnṭ*), that it could mean 1107 or 1147. The reading 1107 is made sure not only by the handwriting of the clerk, but also by the names of various persons listed, who are known from other Geniza papers.

[90] S. D. Goitein, "Yemenites in Palestine and in Egypt at the time of Maimonides and his Son," *Alsheikh Memorial Volume* (Tel Aviv, 1962), pp. 133–148.

[91] Bodl. MS Heb. c 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 7, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Zion*, 17 (1952), 144–147 *.

[92] TS Box K 25, f. 240, no. 17.

[93] TS 20.24, ed. S. Schechter in *JQR*, 12 (1900), 112 (at the time of which publication the MS had not yet received a library mark); re-ed. E. Ashtor, *Sefarad*, 24 (1964), 60–63.

[94] Assaf, *Texts*, pp. 116–118; S. D. Goitein in *Yediot Bahaqirat Eretz-Israel*, 23 (1964), 247–249.

[95] TS Box K 25, f. 240, nos. 18, 19, 20.

[96] TS Arabic Box 53, f. 37⁺.

[97] Readers anxious to know how women, unable to secure a divorce, managed to separate from their unsatisfactory husbands, are advised to consult *Med. Soc.*, Vol. III, chap. ix.

[98] TS 12.179, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Yerushalayim*, II/5 (Jerusalem, 1955), 69–70.

[99] TS 18 J 2, f. 10, ed. *ibid.*, pp. 60–61.

[100] ULC Or 1080 J 7.

## 3. FREEDOM OF COMMUNICATION

[1] Claude Cahen, "Un texte peu connu relatif au commerce oriental d'Amalfi au X siècle," *Archivo Storico per le Province Napoletane*, n.s. 34 (Napoli, 1953–1954), 3–8.

[2] The story of the three foreigners is found in the Zūṭā Scroll, ed. A. Neubauer in *JQR*, 8 (1896), 549. The letter to Aden: *India Book* 187.

[3] See p. 36, above, Ibn Jubayr: M. J. de Goeje, "Internationaal Handelsverkeer in de Middeleuwen," *Verslagen . . . der Kon. Akademie, Letterkunde* (Amsterdam, 1909), pp. 264–265.

[4] TS 13 J 17, f. 4, quoted in Mann, II, 109, where, however, the word Khorāsān was misread.

[5] TS 10 J 5, f. 12*v*, l. 7, *Nahray* 157. TS 12.362, top, *Nahray* 238.

[6] See p. 268, above.
[7] TS 13 J 14, f. 2, ll. 18–20, *Nahray* 17.
[8] DK XXVIII, l. 33.
[9] BM Or 5542, f. 15, ll. 13, 19, 21, and verso, ll. 1–2.
[10] Tunisia: TS 12.133, ll. 17–18. Egypt: *India Book* 251.
[11] P. 268, above.
[12] MS Meunier (private), ed. I. Ben Zvi, *Zion*, 3 (1938), 180–182, cf. the Note by A. I. Braver, *ibid.*, p. 275; the letter is from the beginning of the eleventh century, as it is addressed to the three Tustarī brothers in Old Cairo, who are well known from other Geniza letters. Free circulation of foreign money: Carlo M. Cipolla, *Money, Prices and Civilization in the Mediterranean World* (Princeton, 1956), pp. 14–15.
[13] TS 12.435*v*, ll. 17–18.
[14] E.g., Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 11.
[15] ULC Or 1080 J 22, ll. 8, 13, 22 *.
[16] *Nahray, passim. Mu'āhid:* Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 35.
[17] TS 13 J 26, f. 22, ll. 14–20, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Eretz-Israel*, 4 (1956), 152–153.
[18] S. D. Goitein, "Evidence on the Muslim Poll Tax from non-Muslim Sources," *JESHO*, 6 (1963), 278–295.
[19] TS 24.29, ed. Mann, I, 369.
[20] BM Or 5544, f. 1, partially ed. in Mann, II, 191 *.
[21] TS 13 J 3, f. 4 *.
[22] TS 13 J 21, f. 5, l. 17, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Alsheikh Memorial Volume* (Tel Aviv, 1962), p. 146.
[23] TS 12.3 *.
[24] TS 13 J 23, f. 3, ll. 5–6, *Nahray* 71 and *passim*.
[25] TS 12.347, ed. Mann, *Texts*, I, 385.
[26] Bodl. MS Heb. b 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 7 *.
[27] Assaf, *Texts*, p. 117, l. 13.
[28] TS 24.38, ll. 17–19, trans. in Goitein, *Education*, p. 115.
[29] TS 20.174, ll. 2–3: *al-jāliya 'l-shāmiyya*, the poll-tax office for Syro-Palestinians.
[30] TS NS J 29*v*, l. 11.
[31] TS Box K 3, f. 32*a*, dated Oct., 1150. The name of the town: Sanbuṭya (Ar. Sunbāṭ). The scholar: Joseph ha-Levi, *yeḥīd ha-dōr*, "the unique," is Ibn Migash, who died in 1141.
[32] Mann, I, 73–74. For Oriental spices traded in Mayence in the tenth century see A. Miquel in *Annales-Economies-Sociétés-Civilisations*, 21 (1966), 1059–1060.
[33] TS 13 J 14, f. 21, ll. 15–18, *India Book* 106. The year 1106 is generally accepted as the year of the death of Nathan b. Yehiel of Rome, the author of the thesaurus (Baron, *History of the Jews*, VII, 231 n. 31).
[34] Cf. the clash with the excellent French scholar Joseph b. Gershom (about whom see p. 52, above) reported in Abraham Maimuni, *Responsa*, p. 15. Maimonides in France: D. J. Silver, *Maimonidean Criticism and the Maimonidean Controversy, 1180–1240,* (Leiden, 1965).
[35] H. Z. Hirschberg in *Eretz-Israel*, 5 (1958), 216.
[36] The unfamiliarity of the French scholars with the practical application of civil law is the subject of a famous letter of Moses Maimonides to Phineas b. Meshullam, a French rabbi, who served as judge in Alexandria (A. Frei-

mann, *Mose ben Maimon Responsa* [Jerusalem, 1934], Introduction, p. xlvii, and Index *s.v.*). The letter is printed, e.g., in A. Kahana, *Jewish Historical Literature* (in Heb.) (Warsaw, 1922), I, 250. The succession of Anatoli: TS 18 J 3, f. 15, and ENA 2744.

[37] TS 13 J 27, f. 11*v*, ll. 17–20 (Feb. 4, 1214).

[38] TS Arabic Box 54, f. 66*v*, ll. 3–8.

[39] University Museum Philadelphia E 16522, summary by S. D. Goitein in *JQR*, 49 (1958), 48–52.

[40] TS 13 J 2, f. 25. Mann, I, 271 n. 1, mentions the document, but dates it erroneously "1457 Sel. (1146 C.E.)." The text clearly has 1451, corresponding to 1140. Shaked, *Bibliography*, p. 115, is to be changed accordingly. The man is called "Joseph ha-Kohen, the Sicilian, son of our master Moses," which shows that he hailed from Sicily. Had al-Siqillī been his family name, it would have come after the name of his father. The document is in the best handwriting of the judge Nathan b. Samuel. This Joseph might have been the father of Abraham b. Joseph al-Siqillī (TS 32.10, l. 27).

[41] Runciman, *Byzantine Civilization* (Meridian Books: New York, 1955), p. 235.

[42] TS Loan 20, l. 6, ed. Mann, *Texts*, I, 396–398, 404–408.

[43] *Letters of Samuel b. Eli*, ed. S. Assaf (Jerusalem, 1930), pp. 117–122.

[44] Mosseri L 101, ed. Mann, *Texts*, I, 343–345.

[45] TS 13 J 7, f. 11, noted S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz*, 30 (1961), 379 n. 6. Only the left side of this lengthy court record has been preserved, but the main points are clear. In Denia, Spain, Ephraim b. Jacob appoints one Abūn as his attorney to claim whatever his late father might have left him in Egypt. In a postscript, Abūn is specifically empowered to sue a man called Abū Naṣr Musāfir. The third entry is made in al-Mahdiyya, as is proved by the signature of the judge Moses b. Labraṭ, well-known from letters written by him, as well as from documents, some dated 1098. Raḥamīm b. Amram (his father's name is spelled also in the Arabic way, 'Imrān), the second signatory, appears again in the fourth entry, which contains expressly the (Hebrew) name of Alexandria used at that time, Nō Amōn, and is signed by *qwb dr'y*, which is the other half of the name "Abraham b. Jacob Der'ī," then judge in the Mediterranean port. Of the final signature only "*sf*, Head of the court of the Academy" is preserved. The name is to be read as "Solomon, son of Joseph, late Head of the court of the Academy," a religious dignatary active in Fustat (cf. Mann, I, 187 n. 2). The remnants of the signature here differ from the signature of this judge in TS 13 J 2, f. 4 (Fustat, 1094), but since both are in monumental style, they can hardly be compared. On the other hand, it seems that the handwriting here is similar to that in Solomon b. Joseph's lengthy historical poem celebrating the Fatimid victory over the Seljuk invaders of Egypt in 1077 (see Julius H. Greenstone, *The Turkoman Defeat at Cairo by Solomon ben Joseph ha-Kohen*, reprinted from the *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, 22 [Jan., 1906], 6–7, facsimile). (Mann was wrong in assuming that this Solomon had a scholarly brother called Judah. The Judah to whom Mann refers was a Babylonian, not a Palestinian, and that Judah never refers to his father as Head of the court of the Academy [cf. Mann, II, 101]. Thus, it cannot be assumed that the signature is to be read as "Judah b. Joseph.")

[46] TS 10 J 10, f. 3, ed. E. Ashtor in *Sefarad*, 24 (1964), 63–68. As may

sometimes occur even to the most competent scholar, some mishaps in the reading and translation of the letter caused that its import was lost on the editor. The writer of the letter was called Ephraim b. Jacob, and, although these biblical names were very much in use in those times, it may well be that he is identical with the merchant from Denia mentioned in the document discussed in the preceding note. He may either have continued the overseas business of his father or have traveled to Egypt because his attorney was not too successful in claiming his father's estate. No other Ephraim b. Jacob has been found by me in the Geniza.

[47] TS 13 J 23, f. 22, ll. 18–20, margin, l. 2, *Nahray* 223. In this letter the writer assumes that his father is alive. In TS 13 J 28, f. 11, l. 14, *Nahray* 159, he speaks of his mother as a mourning widow. Thus, he must have received a letter or another report from home.

[48] Ibn Jubayr, p. 288, ll. 1–5.

## 4. THE GENIZA PEOPLE AS REPRESENTATIVE OF MEDITERRANEAN SOCIETY

[1] *"Al-nāsu bi-azmānihim ashbahu minhum bi-aslāfihim,"* quoted by Ibn Qutayba (d. 889), *'Uyūn al-akhbār* (Cairo, 1925), Vol. I, p. 1.

[2] Below, pp. 253–254.

[3] Erich Brauer, *Ethnologie der Jemenitischen Juden* (Heidelberg, 1934), p. 267, states that the separation of the Jewish living quarters was confined to the cities. But a survey carried out by me with immigrants from more than a thousand localities in Yemen during the years 1949–1954 showed that isolated Jewish settlements were common also in the countryside ("Portrait of a Yemenite Weavers' Village," *JSS*, 17 [1955], 3–26).

[4] Goitein, *Social Services*, p. 15.

[5] C. Rathjens, *Jewish Domestic Architecture in San'a, Yemen. Israel Oriental Society Notes and Studies*, no. 7 (Jerusalem, 1957).

[6] E.g., Fustat: TS Box K 25, f. 251, ll. 23, 26 *; Alexandria: Maimonides, *Responsa*, I, 2.

[7] O. Reuther, *Das Wohnhaus in Bagdad etc., Beitraege zur Bauwissenschaft*, Berlin 1910, 28, 31.

[8] S. D. Goitein, "A Report on Messianic Troubles in Baghdad in 1120–1121," *JQR*, 43 (1952), 57–76.

[9] S. D. Goitein, "Jews and Judaism in Balādhurī's Ansāb al-Ashrāf," *Zion*, 1 (1936), 80.

[10] H. A. R. Gibb, "The Armies of Saladin," *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, ed. S. J. Shaw and W. R. Polk (Boston, 1962), pp. 74–90.

[11] S. D. Goitein, "The Local Jewish Community in the Light of the Cairo Geniza Records," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 12 (1961), 133–158; a somewhat different approach in E. Ashtor, "Some Features of the Jewish Communities in Medieval Egypt," *Zion*, 30 (1965), 61–78, 128–157 (in Heb.). The nature of Jewish communal organization as reflected in the Cairo Geniza documents is discussed in *Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, chap. v.

[12] *Med. Soc.*, Vol. III, chap. x. For the time being see "The Mentality of the Middle Class in Medieval Islam" in Goitein, *Studies*, pp. 255–278.

## CHAPTER II: *The Working People*

### 1. THE SOCIAL CLASSES

[1] Cf., e.g., Farhat J. Ziadeh, "Equality (Kafā'ah) in the Muslim Law of Marriage," *American Journal of Comparative Law,* 6 (1957), 513.

[2] Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima,* chap. ii, *passim,* trans. Franz Rosenthal (New York, 1957), I, 249 ff.

It is not excluded that the local Tunisian vernacular also had an effect on Ibn Khaldūn's usage. The Tunisian olive growers are called *badawīn* in a Geniza letter from the year 1064, Dropsie 389, 1. 57.

[3] Corresponds to Heb. *'aliyyā,* which also designates both the room at the top and the elite, not, however, in the meaning of a social class, but of spiritual attainments.

[4] TS 16.171, l. 21, dated 1004, ed. Mann, *Texts,* II, 198.

[5] ULC Add. 3340, ed. S. D. Goitein, *Tarbiz,* 24 (1955), 144, l. 21 ff.

[6] TS 12.26*.

[7] "Good people" Heb. *ben ṭōvīm:* e.g., TS Box K 15, f. 102, where the term is applied to a poor man heading a list of receivers of alms. "Noble families," Heb. *mishpāḥōt meyūḥāsōt:* very common, e.g., Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Geniza Collection, no. 3, l. 1, ed. Mann, *Texts,* I, 468; *ibid.,* no. 4, *ed. ibid.,* pp. 470, 471. "[The most] illustrious houses," Ar. *ajillā' al-buyūt:* e.g., TS 13 J 17, f. 20, l. 5 (referring to a shipwrecked person from Iraq); University Museum Philadelphia E 16522 (a fugitive from Sicily); TS Arabic Box 48, f. 270*v,* l. 17, *India Book* 86 (India traders from northwest Africa passing through Cairo). "The Sons of People (Society)," Ar. *abnā' al-nās:* TS Arabic Box 53, f. 37 (new husband of granddaughter in Fustat)+*.

[8] TS 12.133 *.

[9] A good example is TS Box K 15, f. 68*v*, which enumerates thirteen generations of a family and eulogizes the sixth and the ninth through thirteenth generations (the last having died recently) for their generosity. Cf. also Mann, *Texts,* I, 469, where the great-grandfather (a nagid) and the grandfather of the living members of the family are praised in such a way.

[10] Strauss, *Mamluks,* I, 178 n. 20, has rightly emphasized that *ḥarīrī* (from which the family name of the famous Arab poet al-Ḥarīrī is derived) originally designated a worker, and not a merchant, in silk; cf. also Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles,* XIII–XIV, 104. This is corroborated by the evidence of the Geniza, where, according to the amount of their contributions, the ḥarīrīs belong to the working rather than to the merchant class (cf., e.g., Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 [Cat. 2876], f. 47, ed. E. Strauss, *Zion,* 7 [1942], 143, or TS 13 J 2, f. 5, l. 8). TS Box K 6, f. 149 is written in the characteristic hand of the prominent judge Samuel b. Saadya ha-Levi (documents signed by him: 1165–1203 A.D.), but may be slightly earlier (see App. D, sec. 57). A number of persons in the list are known from other Geniza records.

[11] The name of the slave was Durrī (Gem) a name borne also by free persons, ENA 4011, f. 41, e.g. (dated 1114). His identity is established by TS Box K 6, f. 177, cf. p. 133, above.

[12] TS 20.180, l. 24, *Nahray* 172; TS 20.133, l. 22 *; TS 12.793, l. 11,

*Nahray* 148; TS 12.434, l. 11. Beggar: *ṣaʿlūk;* craftsman: *ṣāniʿ;* peasant: *muzāriʿ.*

[13] "The son of the clan of sieve makers," Ar. Ibn al-gharābiliyya: Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 61, l. 12, *Nahray* 190; "of indigo-dyers," "of scarf-makers," Ar. Ibn al-khiḍābiyya, ibn al-maqāniʿiyya: both TS Box K 6, f. 149, the latter is called Ibn al-maqāniʿī in K 6, f. 177.

[14] Water carrier: Grohmann, *APEL,* I, 218 ff. (Ushmūnayn, Feb., 1050); poultry man-vendors of dried fruit, Ar. *dajājī-naqliyyīn:* TS Box K 15, f. 36*v;* seller of sal ammoniac-silk worker, *nushādirī-ḥarīrī:* TS 13 J 16, f. 5, l. 16. Cantor-scribe: TS 16.177 (*Khalfūn ḥazzān b. Isaac sōfēr* [Tunis, 10th century]). A silk-weaver, qazzāz, in the Egyptian village Dakshūr was the son of a parchment-maker, ruqūqī: TS NS J 273.

[15] Goitein, *Studies,* p. 348; *idem* in *Speculum,* 29 (1954), 192 n. 19.

[16] TS Box K 15, f. 6*c*, col. I, l. 3 (1178). Ar. *al-naqqād al-ṣayrafī.*

[17] TS 8 J 5, f. 4*d;* TS Arabic Box 30, f. 163*v*. The Muslim doctor was ʿAlī b. Riḍwān (cf. J. Schacht and M. Meyerhof, *The Medico-Philosophical Controversy between Ibn Butlan of Baghdad and Ibn Ridwan of Cairo* (Cairo, 1937), pp. 12, 20.

[18] TS Box K 15, f. 102, col. I, l. 6; Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 15, l. 11 (1022–1023).

[19] K 15, f. 102, col. II, l. 10; TS 13 J 1, f. 7 (1033), mentioned Mann, I, 89 n. 1, II, 346.

[20] Mr. Spinner: TS 13 J 9, f. 5 (Tunisia, 1043). Mr. Potter, etc.: see p. 110, above. Family of "princes" called Shōmēr (Heb., a communal official of low rank): Mann, *Texts,* II, 262.

## 2. THE CRAFTSMEN

[1] Jérôme Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* (Penguin Books, 1956), p. 180.

[2] Abū Saʿīd: Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ,* I, 367. Ṭalḥī and other paper from Fustat: TS 13 J 23, f. 14, l. 17; TS 16.276, *Nahray* 196; *India Book, passim.* Spanish paper: Mosseri L 24, ll. 15–17, *Nahray* 241. Large imports from Damascus: ULC Or 1080 J 42; TS 13 J 15, f. 5; 13 J 14, f. 17, ll. 5–6. Damascene paper, called *shāmī* or *dimashqī* ordered or sent inside Egypt: TS 12.383 (*dast* [quire or package] *waraq dimashqī jayyid;* same order in DK VI, *Nahray* 146); TS 13 J 20, f. 26, l. 14, *Nahray* 34. Book on Damascene paper: TS Loan 149, 1, l. 16, ed. Mann, *Texts,* I, 645. Egyptian merchant acquiring 500 sheets of paper in Spain: ENA Uncatalogued 40, ed. Goitein in *Tarbiz,* 25 (1956), 407, *India Book* 203.

[3] TS 8.106, ed. (faultily) J. Eliash, *Sefunot.* 2 (1958), 20–22 * (partly trans. S. D. Goitein in *JQR,* 45 [1954], 32–35); S. M. Stern, "Three Petitions of the Fāṭimid Period," *Oriens,* 15 (1962), 188–189.

[4] TS 13 J 6, f. 5, ll. 13–14 *.

[5] TS NS J 198, col. II, ll. 19–25 *.

[6] For literature on the Islamic guilds, cf. *EI*[1] *s.v.* "Sinf" (L. Massignon); B. Lewis, "The Islamic Guilds," *Economic History Review, 8* (1937), 20–37; Nikita Elisséeff, "Corporations de Damas sous Nūr al-dīn," *Arabica,* 3 (1956), 61–79; André Raymond, "Une liste des corporations de métiers au Caire en 1801," *Arabica,* 4 (1957), 150–163; Claude Cahen, "Mouvements populaires

. . . ," *Arabica,* 6 (1959), esp. 26–27; *idem, EI*² *s.v.* "Aḥdāth"; Nada Tomiche, "La situation des artisans et petits commerçants en Egypte de la fin du XVIIIᵉ siècle jusqu'au milieu du XIXᵉ," *Studia Islamica,* 12 (Paris, 1960), 79–98. See also sec. 4, n. 1, below. A. A. Dūrī, "The Rise of Crafts and Guilds in Islam" (in Ar.), *Majallat Kulliyyat al-Ādāb,* 1 (Baghdad, 1959), 1–37; R. Le Tourneau, *Fès avant le Protectorat* (Casablanca, 1949), pp. 295–306, with further literature about Islamic corporations of North Africa; *idem, Fez in the Age of the Marinides* (Norman Okla., 1961), pp. 84, 100. See also n. 15, below. Speros Vryonis, Jr., "Byzantine *Demokratia* and the Guilds in the Eleventh Century," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers,* 17 (1963), 287–314.

[7] The list given by Worman, *JQR,* 18 (1905), 15–19, can now be widely expanded. For the Islamic material, cf. Casanova, *Reconstruction,* III, xxxviii–xl.

[8] Glass-coppersmiths: Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 7, l. 6 (the *Catalogue* has 1126, cf. p. 355, below). Grocery-Turners: TS 12.525; the fragment TS 12.616 refers to the same partnership. Potions-Blacksmiths: TS Arabic Box 54, f. 59. Money changer: Bodl. MS Heb. d 74, f. 44. Alchemists (*al-kīmiyyīn*): TS 12.1, l. 5; TS 18 J 1, f. 11, l. 31⁺ (dated Dec. 6, 1081).

[9] Ibn 'Abdūn, ed. E. Lévi-Provençal, *JA,* 224 (1934), 233, l. 9. E. Lévi-Provençal, *Séville Musulmane au debut du XIIᵉ siècle* (Paris, 1947), p. 95.

[10] Money changers: TS Box K 15, f. 6*b*, col. II, and f. 36, l. 18. Metal-caster: K 15, f. 6*d*, ll. 5–6. Two, and then four, porters listed together: TS Box K 15, f. 96.

[11] TS K 15, f. 61.

[12] Painters, *lawwānīn:* DK 13, l. 15, and verso, margin, l. 2. Silk-workers: Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 81, l. 11, and f. 54, margin. Glassmakers: TS NS J 131. Dyers: TS Box 8, f. 66, col. IV, l. 5.

[13] This is clearly evident from the books on market supervision (cf. *Ma'ālim al-Qurba,* English summary, pp. 89–92).

[14] E.g., the *'arīf* of the money-assayers, *al-naqqādīn:* Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 47, margin⁺. Without indication of the group headed by him, but referring to banking operations: TS NS J 198 col. I, l. 3, col. II, ll. 2, 5 *. The plural: *'urafā'* (security given in their presence): TS 18 J 4 f. 10, l. 25. Qūṣ: TS 13 J 26, f. 6*v*, l. 6.

[15] Haim Bentov, "Patrons et artisans juifs de Fès aux 17ᵉ et 18ᵉ siècles," *Sefunot,* 10 (1966), 413–482 (in Heb. with French summary, pp. *23–*27); Yitzhak Rofeh, "Benevolent Society of the Boat-owners in Constantinople," *ibid.,* pp. 623–632 (in Heb. with English summary, p. *30). The extensive rabbinical record book edited by Bentov reveals that there was no strict division of labor between Muslim and Jewish artisans. In some branches, such as goldsmithery and embroidery, the Jews were prominent, and in others, like shoemaking and leatherwork in general, the Muslims. But each of the two religious communities had a share also in the fields in which the other was more renowned (cf. Bentov, *op. cit.,* p. 423).

[16] Maimonides, *Responsa,* II, 360; TS 8 J 7, f. 18 *; TS NS J 150; further details in *Med. Soc.,* Vol. III, chap. ix.

[17] Complaint from a small town addressed to the Nagid Mevōrākh (appr. 1079-1110) against two silk-dyers from Shām: E.g., TS 16.24. Complaint addressed to the same against the Banū Ḥujayla from Tyre, Lebanon: TS 13 J 14, f. 14. Prohibition to exercise craft: Bodl. MS Heb. d 74 (not in printed Cat.), f. 47. The man from Alexandria: TS Arabic Box 30, f. 163.

[18] Carcopino, *Daily Life* (see n. 1), p. 182.

[19] Silversmiths: TS 10 J 14, f. 4. Tailoring: TS 10 J 27, f. 3, sec. 3. Weavers: TS 28.6, sec. B.

[20] TS 12.487. The perfumer Abu 'l-Makārim Nādīv rents the *burj,* or tower, adjoining the synagogue of the Iraqians in order to construct in it basins for rosewater.

[21] TS Box K 15, f. *114v,* col. III, ll. 5–6, *Nahray* 42.

[22] TS 12.291, margin. Ibn al-Naffāṭ: When the Government seized all the olive oil on the market, a person bearing this family name undertook to indemnify the merchants.

[23] I. Davidson, *Thesaurus of Proverbs and Parables* (in Heb.), (Jerusalem, 1957), no. 3084.

[24] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 9 *, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Sefunot,* 8 (1964), 125. Inventory of silkweaver's shop: TS 12.531*v*. Dahshūr: TS NS J 273 *. Carpenter: TS 8 J 7, f. 18 *. In Maimonides, *Responsa,* I, 85–86, implements for silkweaving were bought for 12 dinars (or dirhems, according to some MSS).

[25] TS 10 J 17, f. 18, l. 6.

[26] Competition of employers: TS 12.227, ll. 21–27. Masons: ULC Or 1080 J 104*v*. Mostly, two masons worked together on one day.

[27] TS 20.175*v*, ll. 5–8.

[28] *Ma'ālim al-Qurba,* p. 137, English summary, p. 44.

[29] ULC Or 1081 J 43.

[30] Pp. 362–367, below. The numbers in parentheses refer to this Appendix.

[31] Except in case of parttime work, (e.g., two days a week, App. C, no. 9), when one craftsman was able to participate in various partnerships.

[32] The Lebdī factory was sold later on. Three out of twenty-four shares, i.e., one eighth, cost 136-½ dinars. Thus the total value at the time of the sale was 1,092 dinars. It is natural that the price at selling was somewhat lower than when a partnership of the management of the place was concluded. The document referring to the transaction is a draft, which contains also a description of the site of the factory: TS NS J 215.

[33] Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (2876), f. 47⁺ is a good example. Other lists of the same character and from the same period: TS Box K 15, f. 36 and 60; TS NS J 151. There are many more, cf. *Med. Soc.,* Vol. II, chap. v.

[34] ULC Or 1080 J 278, l. 17: *wa-'innī na'mal al-ḥarīr bi-'ashara darāhim al-raṭl.* Silkweaver: TS 13 J 20, f. 22, ll. 20–21 *. Nineteen and a half cubits were not ordered, but the proprietor had given the weaver a certain quantity of silk thread (most probably with the intention of getting 20 cubits) and was notified in the letter of the yield. Here the payment is not called *ujra,* as usual, but *kirā',* used today in Egypt for "rent" and "fare," but in other countries, e.g., Yemen, for "wages."

[35] TS 8 J 25, f. 13, ll. 17, 23, 25, 26, *Nahray* 234.

[36] The MS has *w'qft* (*wāqaft*) for *wāfaqt,* which, however, seems to be not a misspelling, but a common mispronunciation, since the same form appears elsewhere (TS 28.17, l. 46 *; 10 J 5, f. 15 [dated 1021]; 8 J 32, f. 3 [dated 1162]).

[37] TS 13 J 15, f. 19, margin⁺. A small quantity of silk was woven into the linen. At that time, the silver dirhem must have had a particularly low value, namely 1/48 of a dinar (App. D, sec. 43).

[38] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 91, ll. 17–20, *Nahray* 30.

[39] Maimonides, *Responsa,* II, 433. Making a piece of jewelry: *yaṣūghuh.*

[40] TS Box K 3, f. 11.

[41] TS Box K 15, f. 45.

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] TS Box K 25, f. 240, entry no. 40: *Darb al-Maqādisa,* literally: "the street of the Jerusalemites, "the entrance to the house which was a pious foundation, the revenue of which was paid to persons living in Jerusalem. This house, or, rather compound, is frequently mentioned.

[44] Davidson, *Thesaurus of Proverbs* (cf. above, n. 23), no. 2952, n. 8. In a letter to a customs official in Damietta he is advised to quit the government service and take up again his craft when he would be independent "like a king." DK 121, top. ed. A. Scheiber, *Sefunot,* 5 (1961), 466.

[45] Thus both in letters and legal documents. A bankrupt silk-worker is called "young man" (Heb. *bāḥūr*), although he had already been married and divorced twice and although his father and grandfather are styled as "elders." It was not the occupation, but the social prestige of the individual, which counted (TS 24.34).

[46] Bodl. MS Heb. b 3, f. 23 (Cat. 2806, no. 21), l. 17, *Nahray* 74. The writer, Joseph b. Khalfa al-Qarawī, is mentioned as transporting goods from the West to Egypt (TS 13 J 28, f. 2, l. 13), and from Egypt to Tripoli, Lebanon (TS 13 J 16, f. 19, ll. 15–16, *Nahray* 224). A bill of lading of his is preserved in TS NS J 300*.

[47] R. Brunschvig, "Métiers vils en Islam," *Studia Islamica,* 16 (1962), 4–60; see above, p. 75.

[48] Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'a, II, 109; S. D. Goitein, "The Medical Profession in the Light of the Cairo Geniza Documents," *HUCA,* 34 (1963), 184.

[49] Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Geniza MS 24, l. 6; TS Arabic Box 6, f. 28*v*, l. 8; ULC Or 1080 J 29, address, left side.

[50] S. D. Goitein, "The Local Jewish Community . . . ," *Journal of Jewish Studies,* 12 (1961), 148.

[51] TS 13 J 18, f. 26, ll. 5–7: *yuqaṣṣirhū lī wayufaṣṣilhū.*

[52] Bodl. MS Heb. e 94, f. 19; TS 13 J 21, f. 17*v*, l. 6*.

[53] He was, however, the son of a former Gaon (cf. *Iggeret Sherīra,* ed. B. M. Levin [Haifa, 1921], 116–117; Baron, *History of the Jews,* V, 75).

[54] S. D. Goitein, *From the Land of Sheba* (New York, 1947), pp. 40–42.

[55] His name was Ḥayyīm Ḥubāra (abridged to Ḥ. in his life story told by S. D. Goitein in *Davar,* Literary Supplement [Tel Aviv], [in Heb.], no. 141, Kislev 3, 1931).

## 3. THE WAGE EARNERS

[1] TS 10 J 12, f. 20, margin, *Nahray,* 144.

[2] *Mose ben Maimon Epistulae,* ed. D. H. Baneth (Jerusalem, 1946), p. 68. For the Yemenite attitude, cf. Goitein, *Jemenica,* pp. 46–47, no. 253.

[3] L. A. Mayer, *Islamic Metalworkers* (Geneva, 1959), p. 14.

[4] Mr. translates here *sayyidī,* my lord. Ibn Saghīr (thus, and not: Ṣaghīr): TS 10 J 10, f. 29, l. 6 and verso, l. 5 (second half of eleventh century), *Nahray* 193.

[5] ULC Or 1080 J 6 (1034). In this case the "boy" was a commercial agent.

We find the same term for a carpenter's helper in Or 1080 J 104*v* (dated 1045) and for a mason's adjunct in TS Box K 3, f. 11 (dated 1183).

[6] Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 47, sec. B, col. II, l. 3[+], and sec. A, col. II, l. 19. The list is quoted here as it is printed. Actually it begins on sec. B, col. II.

[7] TS Box K 15, fs. 14 and 66, which are parts of one document (early eleventh century).

[8] *Ghilmān al-ʿāmil,* "the young men of the tax collector": TS Box K 15, f. 53, col. I, l. 13. *Sulṭān wa-ṣibyān,* "government [dues] and [tips for] the officials": Gottheil-Worrell, XXXVI, p. 166, ll. 30, 33*.

[9] Glass factory: TS 12.581, l. 16. Silk-weaving: TS Box K 15, f. 93, col. II, l. 19. Bride-comber: Box K 15, f. 66, col. I, l. 6. Cf. also TS 8 J 5, f. 14*c:* Barakāt, known as the *ṣāniʿ* of Ben Sālim. In lists of contributors, sometimes a laborer is listed together with his employer (TS NS J 179, l. 19, and verso, ll. 8–9), or an employer with his laborers (e.g., BM Or 5566 C, 11*v*, l. 8, and 12*v*, l. 2: *Ibn al-Shāʿir wa-ṣunnāʿih*).

[10] TS NS J 24.

[11] TS NS J 199, col. III, l. 1.

[12] TS 20.99, l. 29.

[13] Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 8* (in a glass factory).

[14] "Makhlūf who serves the Nēzer" (title of a judge), whose house, that is, wife, got clothing from the community, and who certainly acted mainly as a messenger of the court or did other, semiofficial errands for his master (TS Box K 15, f. 48, col. III).

[15] The Jewish year 1057-1058 was a leap year containing thirteen months. For this reason it had to be expressly stipulated that a year of only twelve months was intended.

[16] The unsigned first draft: TS 13 J 1, f. 13. A small fragment of the clean copy: TS 12.580. The third fragment on employment in glass work: ENA 4011, f. 69 (*ʿan ujrat sabīkat zujāj*). The craftsman appearing in this document, Aaron b. Fuhayd, made a settlement with his divorcée before 1032: TS 12.617.

[17] *JESHO,* 2 (1959), 262–280.

[18] TS Box K 15, f. 100, l. 11*. The previous day the mason worked half a day for 2-¼ dinars, but got his lunch (l. 8).

[19] TS Box K 5, f. 76. This box contains children's exercises, and our statement obviously was written by a boy, who was still struggling both with his letters and his orthography.

[20] TS Box K 3, f. 11.

[21] TS Box K 15, f. 45. In Mosseri L 21, the carpenters and sawyers receive lunch, costing ¾ dirhem. The Abū Ṣīr document is contained in TS Box K 15, f. 53. The packers received 1 dinar, 1 qīrāṭ, and 1 ḥabba (i.e., 1-4/72 dinars) at a time when a dinar corresponded to 31.2 dirhems. This makes about 33 dirhems. In most other accounts, the payments for the packers are lumped together with other expenses for the transport of the goods (cf., e.g., ULC Or 1080 J 291 [1024]; Gottheil-Worrell, XIV, p. 74).

[22] TS 10 J 20, f. 5*v*, l. 5, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz,* 32 (1963), 188, 299.

[23] DK XXI (from the time of Maimonides, around 1180–1190)*.

[24] Bodl. MS Heb. b 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 5. The terms *mulayyiṭ, talyīṭ* must refer, according to the context, to the plastering, but have not yet been found elsewhere.

[25] TS Arabic Box 54, f. 15*; TS Box 8, f. 76*.

[26] TS 8 J 5, f. 4c, sec. 2*. The contract of May, 1217, is included in a still unnumbered fragment of the ENA Collection in the Jewish Theological Seminary, New York.

[27] TS NS J 277*. In TS NS J 405, dated 1275, one dyer gives to another a loan (the sum is not preserved), which he has to return in weekly installments of 3 dirhems. This, too, probably was the case of a workman being the debtor of his employer. Maimonides, *Responsa*, II, 451: *Ṣāni' ya'mal 'induh dā'im.*

[28] A particularly telling example is found in TS 13 J 19, f. 20, ll. 28–30 and margin, *Nahray* 88.

[29] BM Or 10588 (Gaster Collection 1493), dated 1154. Advance (*taqdima*): TS NS J 199, col. IV, l. 3 ("The workman received an advance of a quarter dinar, which he returned").

[30] S. D. Goitein, "Evidence on the Muslim Poll Tax," *JESHO*, 6 (1963), 285.

[31] TS 8 J 19, f. 1. The packer was in Būṣīr, but the payment was made in Old Cairo, most probably because the packer was a Syro-Palestinian (cf. above, p. 410).

[32] Most probably, he was in receipt of loaves of bread and alms distributed by the community.

[33] *Ma'ālim al-Qurba*, p. 234, English summary, p. 94.

[34] Carcopino, *Daily Life* (see p. 410, n. 1), p. 186.

[35] In TS Box K 15, f. 100, we find a master mason and his helpers working once one day, once half a day, and in one case, two masons receiving two-fifths of a full day's wage.

[36] TS NS J 9, ll. 13–14.

[37] Ibn 'Abdūn, ed. Lévi-Provençal (see p. 411, n. 9), p. 244.

[38] ENA 151 (2557)*.

[39] According to the often-quoted report of the Patriarch Dionysius of Tel Mahre, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien*, trans. J. B. Chabot (1899), III, 63; Mez, *Renaissance*, chap. 4, pp. 42–43; Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, XIII–XIV, 91.

[40] TS 12.31, ll. 4–12. Flax-combing: see p. 105, above.

[41] MS Abraham I. Katsh, no. 11, ll. 11, 15.

[42] Goitein, *Education*, pp. 85–92.

[43] TS 16.286, ll. 14–18*. The detail about the price of bread is mentioned in the same letter.

[44] J. David-Weill, "Contract de travail au pair," *E. Lévi-Provençal Memorial Volume* (Paris, 1962), II, 509–515.

## 4. THE MAIN INDUSTRIES

[1] J. P. Waltzing, *Étude historique sur les corporations professionnelles chez les Romains* (Louvain, 1900), IV, 1–49, quoted by J. Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* (Penguin Books, 1956), p. 306, n. 20. The Roman corporations included traders as well as craftsmen. The same holds true of the list published by André Raymond, "Une liste des Corporations de métiers au Caire en 1801," *Arabica*. 4 (1957), 150–162. *Dictionnaire des métiers damascains* (Paris, 1960), Vol. I, M. S. Al-Qasimy, Vol. II, J. Al-Qasimi (sic) and K. Al-Azem. Cf. also the literature quoted above, p. 410, n. 6.

[2] Makers of kohl sticks (*mīlī*): TS NS J 27, col. III, sec. 4, l. 4 (buys half a

house in 1143); *bint al-milī:* TS NS J 291*v*, l. 1 (a case of inheritance). Writing cases (*dawātī*): TS 10 J 9, f. 9, l. 4, *Nahray* 73 (Ibn al-Dawātī, a merchant); a dawātī provides for his three children: TS 16.134 (fall, 1044). Mirrors (*mir'ātī*): BM Or 5566 C, f. 9, l. 28⁺; TS NS J 341 (accounts). Fans (*marāwiḥī*): TS Box K 15, f. 43 (in a list of names, it seems, of contributors), ULC Or 1080 J 46 (collector of contributions for the poor), and often. Spindles (*maghāzilī*): TS Box K 15, f. 48, col. IV, ll. 8–9 (list of poor); f. 85, col. II (list of receivers of clothing); TS Box K 25, f. 169, l. 12 (payers of rent in a public building), and others. Sieves (*gharābiliyya*): Bodl. MS Heb. c 28, f. 61*v*, l. 12⁺, and TS 8 J 25 f. 6, l. 8, *Nahray* 160. Combs (*amshāṭī*): extremely common. Beads (*kharazī*): common. Stringer of beads (*naẓẓām*): TS 13 J 25 f. 19, l. 15, *Nahray* 181. Perforator of pearls (*thaqqāb al-lūlū*): TS Box K 15, fs. 14 and 66 (these are two parts of one list); K 15, f. 93, TS NS J 199. Corals (*marjānī*): very common. Mats (*ḥuṣrī, alladhī ya'mal al-ḥuṣar*): TS 20.175, l. 6, and verso, l. 7; cf. *Ma'ālim al-Qurba,* chaps. 58, 60, 62, and 66.

[3] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 93; TS 8 J 20, f. 8*v*, ll. 1–11, *India Book* 192.

[4] "Sawduster" (*nushārī*). The son of such a man was the proprietor of a ship: BM Or 5542, f. 9, *Nahray* 67; JNUL 2, ed. E. Strauss in *Zion,* 7 (1942), 153. Cf. Dozy, *Supplément,* II, 671*b*.

[5] "Downer" (*zaghghāb*): TS Box K 15, f. 66*v*, col. I.

[6] *'Allūsh al-jarbī al-qaffāṣ ben Nissīm:* TS 20.4 (around 1046).

[7] The same would be the case with the names of professions culled from Muslim books on market supervision, biography, geography, and history.

[8] E.g., horse trainer (*rā'iḍ*): TS 16.13*v*, l. 17; maker of hunting spears (*maṭāridī*): TS 13 J 28, f. 9, ll. 6 and 11, *Nahray* 126; maker of lances (*rammāḥ*): Mosseri L 130, l. 12, *Nahray* 220. See n. 69.

[9] Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Al-Tabaṣṣur fi 'l-Tijāra* (*Handbook of Commerce*) (Damascus, 1932), p. 339, says that the best crimson was found in Spain and that only a certain group of Jews knew how to find it, cf. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles,* XV–XVI, 35, 70.

[10] This has been shown in the Ph.D. dissertation of Dr. Hayyim J. Cohen on the occupations of Muslim religious scholars down to the period of the Crusaders (Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1963, in Heb.; not yet published). He notes 55 Muslim gold- and silversmiths and workers in the mint, 22 manufacturers of glass, and 443 pharmacists and perfumers. See also Brockelmann, GAL², Index, *s.v. Ḥarīrī, Dabbaġ, Sabbāġ, Zajjāj,* and *'Aṭṭār.*

[11] Abū Sa'd Tustarī (d. 1047) was vizier to the mother of the caliph, but had the power of a plenipotentiary minister. His son became vizier to the caliph after having embraced Islam. Several professing Christians served as viziers under the Fatimids.

[12] Spinner (*ghazzāl*): DK XV (a merchant, Aleppo, Syria, around 1040); TS 10 J 21, f. 1, TS 13 J 9, f. 5, TS 13 J 29, f. 2, and others (a merchant in Zawīlat al-Mahdiyya, Tunisia, 1047); TS 13 J 8, f. 5, top, *Nahray* 180 and *passim* (Muḥammad al-Ghazzāl, a merchant and shipowner who did not know how to read and write). Weaver (*ḥā'ik*): TS Box K 15, f. 70, col. I, l. 2, misread in Mann, II, 247 n. 2. For partnerships in weaving, see Appendix C, nos. 3, 5 (13). A *ḥā'ik* paid for his workshop, dukkān, a rent of 5 dirhems, probably per month: Bodl. MS Heb. b 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 5*v*, l. 22.

[13] W. F. Leggett, *The Story of Silk* (New York, 1949), p. 1. For bibliographical data about silk in our period, cf. R. S. Lopez, "China Silk in Europe in the Yuan Period," JAOS, 72 (1952), 73 n. 3, and *idem,* "Silk Industry in the Byzantine Empire," *Speculum,* 20 (1945), 1–42. For the local industry see D. Chevallier, "Le filage de la soie et du coton . . . ," *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Études Orientales* (Damas), 18 (1964), 85 ff.

[14] E.g., Shaṭṭanawf, Benhā, Minyat Ziftā, and Qalyūb in 1141 A.D.: TS 20.80. "Outside Sammanūd" in 1162: TS 8 J 32, f. 3. Tax-farming on weaving and dyeing of silk in Ibwān, 1106 A.D.: Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 8. In Qalyūb: Bodl. MS. Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 69 (1155 A.D.). The ḥarīrīn of al-Maḥalla: TS 8 J 5, f. 18 c (1157); TS 8 J 32, f. 3; Maimonides,*Responsa,* I, 243. Dukkān al-ḥarīrīn in Minyat al-Qā'id: TS 13 J 21, f. 13.

[15] E.g., Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 64*b,* ll. 7–13; Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 52*; TS 13 J 22, f. 30, l. 6, and frequent in *Nahray.* For literary sources, see E. Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne Musulmane* (Paris, 1953), III, 233 ff.

[16] E.g., TS 20.69, l. 6 (Sicilian raw silk sold in Qayrawān); TS 12.367, l. 18 (same in Alexandria); TS 20.122 (sent from Palermo and from Mazara); ULC Or 1080 J 22 * (sent from Palermo to Damsīs in Egypt). Frequent in *Nahray.*

For the Norman deportation of the Jews and the silk-workers from Greece to Sicily, see Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles,* XV–XVI, 56 (where for 441/1149, 541/1147 is to be read); also Amari, *Musulmani di Sicilia,* III, 441.

[17] About the prices of silk and lāsīn, see pp. 222–224, above.

[18] Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles,* XV–XVI, 44.

[19] Cf. Heyd, *Commerce du Levant* I, 178, esp. nn. 6 and 7, 171 (n. 2). The European word damask has nothing to do with pre-Islamic Arabic *dimaqs,* which is derived from Greek *metaxa* (as believed by some scholars), for this word was not used by the Arabs at the time of their contacts with merchants from western Europe. Silk from Palestine and Syria: e.g., TS 13 J 19, f. 27, l. 8+ (once, when no silk fabrics arrived in Old Cairo from the West, some supply from Syria kept the price down); TS Box K 15, f. 99, col. III (a blue Damascene silk robe pawned); TS 13 J 22, f. 10, l. 9 (red and black silk fabrics ordered in Ramle from another place in Palestine); TS 8 J 15, f. 32 (five camel loads of silk on their way from Palestine to Egypt [fifteenth century]).

[20] Cf. p. 46, above.

[21] Lopez-Raymond, *Medieval Trade,* p. 22. The "Book of the Prefect" was promulgated in 911 or 912. As we see here, at least some of its regulations must have been observed in the subsequent centuries as well. One document, dated 1157, speaks about Rūmī silk in al-Maḥalla: TS 8 J 5, f. 18. As it is mentioned together with *lāsīn,* however, I take it as referring to silk coming from Christian Sicily. In a letter from Jerusalem sent to Fustat around 1060, colored Constantinople silk, *ḥarīr quṣṭanṭīnī maṣbūgh,* is ordered together with Spanish crimson, *qirmiz shādhūnī.* Probably these commodities, too, came to Egypt via Sicily; TS 13 J 6, f. 22*v,* l. 16. About silk from Cyprus see p. 453 n. 23, below.

[22] TS NS J 58, f. 3, l. 3 ("Iraqian raw silk is much in demand"). Iraqian lāsīn in TS 8 J 5, f. 18: cf. the preceding note, differentiated from the Rūm

*lāsīn*. For Alexandria as exchange center for silk, see p. 223, above; for silk industry there see *Med. Soc.*, Vol. III, chap. viii, and M. A. Marzouk, *History of Textile Industry in Alexandria 331* B.C.–*1517* A.D. (Alexandria, 1955), p. 65 (reference only to Mamluk period).

[23] Heyd, *Commerce du Levant*, II, 671.

[24] Local (*baladī*): Dropsie 344, l. 2, *India Book* 272; ULC Or 1080 J 284, *India Book* 249; Dropsie 400, l. 8 (the three letters are from the twelfth century). *Ma'ālim al-Qurba*, Eng. summary, p. 45. Leggett, *Story of Silk* (see n. 13), p. 133. Madame Nada Tomiche kindly drew my attention to F. Mengin, *Histoire de l'Égypte sous Mohammed-Aly* (Paris, 1823), II, 381, where the story of the 500 Syrians is told.

[25] TS 13 J 22 f. 30, ll. 20–22: naqqāḍa, "unravelers," in the plural. The word for "reel": *maslak*. ENA 2558, f. 4, l. 23: *al-mulḥim*. For the *mulḥam* material, see Dozy, *Supplément*. II, 522*a*.

[26] TS 13 J 3 f. 4, ll. 12 and 21: *khazzāsh maqshūr waghayr maqshūr;* TS 20.69*v*, ll. 5 and 19: *lāsin muqashshar;* Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 64*b*, l. 12: *(ḥarīr) muqashshar*. TS 13 Ja 2, ed. H. Hirschfeld in *JQR*, 16 (1903), 577: *Ibn al-Muqashshir*. This identification of "peeled" with waste and spun silk is tentative.

[27] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 42, ll. 5 and 7, *Nahray* 221. *Ma'ālim al-Qurba*, Eng. summary, p. 45; Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles*, XV–XVI, 63 (both with question marks as to the meaning). According to a suggestion by Professor R. S. Lopez, the word is probably derived from Greek *katartarioi*, silk spinners.

[28] Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie*, I, 141–142, and 543–544.

[29] For the extensive literature on the Rahdānites see *The World History of the Jewish People: The Dark Ages*, ed. Cecil Roth (Tel Aviv, 1966), 23–29, 386 nn. 12–20. See, however, Cl. Cahen, "Y a-t-il eu des Rahdānites?" *REJ*, 123 (1964), 499–505.

[30] "The farmers are at present occupied with the turning of the flax": TS 13 J 23, f. 16, l. 17. "Flax of the farmers, *muzāri'īn*" as opposed to the "flax of the workers, *ṣunnā'* ": TS 13 J 27, f. 18, margin.

[31] "I bought excellent flax, coming from the scutching of the workers": TS 13 J 27, f. 18, l. 17. In Arabic, *nafḍ al-ṣunnā':* cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, II, 703*a* (from *The Arabian Nights*). A detailed interesting report about scutching in the great flax-growing center of Būṣīr is contained in ENA 4020, f. 20.

[32] The personal supervision of the combing of the flax is emphasized in DK XXVIII, ll. 22, 29, and margin (*tastamshiṭhu anta walā tashtarihi mamshūṭ min kattanānī*), and TS 13 J 25, f. 15, ll. 15–16, 23–24. "(Flax-) comber," *mashshāṭ*, as a family name, in Mose ben Maimon, *Epistulae*, ed. D. H. Baneth (Jerusalem, 1946), p. 70 l. 18.

[33] TS 13 J 15, f. 19, l. 12, where *kattān manfūsh* must have the same or a similar meaning as *mamshūṭ*, i.e., hatcheled, as the context shows. Bodl. MS Heb. c 13 (Cat. 2807), f. 1: 250 pounds of *mushāqa*, or scrap of flax, cost 4 dinars in November, 1124.

[34] TS 13 J 15, f. 15, ll. 16–17 (*yuḥsin 'amal al-kattān*).

[35] Cotton from Tripoli, Lebanon: ULC Or 1080 J 17, l. 3, *Nahray* 85; TS 13 J 16, f. 19, l. 19, *Nahray* 224. From Tunisia: TS 20.76, l. 21. As we hear mostly of cotton *goods* coming from Tunisia, however, "two bales of cotton" *rizmatayn quṭn*, may here mean cotton *fabrics*. The Syrians imported cotton also into Tunisia (cf. TS 13 J 19, f. 27, l. 20+), and so

did the Rūm (according to the same MS) obviously from Sicily (cf. also Amari, *Musulmani di Sicilia,* II, 512).

[36] It is therefore difficult to explain technical terms not found elsewhere, e.g., *raṭlayn quṭn muzbid,* literally two pounds of "foaming" or "cream-colored" cotton: TS 13 J 25, f. 15, l. 15.

[37] Egypt as exporter of wool: TS 12.479, l. 5; TS NS J 197 (exported to Spain); TS Arabic 30, f. 255, l. 10; DK 14, margin (as raw material and as purple cloth). The account TS Arabic 30, f. 215, l. 10 * probably also refers to the export of Egyptian wool. Importer: TS 8 J 22 f. 18 (from the West); TS 13 J 14, f. 17, ll. 11–12 (hair from Syria).

[38] Wool clothing: TS 13 J 35 f. 10, top (*mayzar*); *ibid.,* l. 17 (*buqyār*). Purple cloth: preceding note and TS Box K 15, f. 71 (the writer, a purple dyer, pays "25" to a wool-maker).

[39] The bazaar of the wool-makers: TS Box K 25, f. 169; TS 13 J 16, f. 15 and frequently. See also preceding note.

[40] Hemp for ropes: ULC Or 1080 J 39. Rope-maker in Damascus: TS 20.92, sec. A, l. 2, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Eretz-Israel,* 8 (1967), 288–297; Qāsimy, *op. cit.* (above, p. 99), I, 90); *aḥbālī:* TS 8 J 25, f. 15. Sea wool: ULC Or 1080 J 77, l. 24; Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles,* XV–XVI, 60.

[41] Glitter (*talmī'*): ULC Or 1080 J 77, ll. 10, 14, 28; gloss (*zaytūnī mujallā,* of "satin"): TS 20.69*v*, l. 20; iridescence (*ṭā'ūṣī,* "like a peacock"): TS 12.372, l. 9, (or *fākhitī,* "like a ring dove"): ULC Or 1080 J 77, ll. 2, 7, 19, 23; stripes (many expressions); waves (*mu'arraj*): TS 12.133, l. 29; patterns (*mulawwan*). Of one color and with no pattern (*muṣmat*): common, especially in precious textiles. Some terms still defy explanation, e.g., DK XII, l. 14, where a silk-weaver asks for instructions as to the pattern of the desired fabric ("do you wish it *bisakākīn?*" literally, with knives [cf. Dozy, *Supplément,* I, 669*a:* a turban with knives, i.e., whose ends are unraveled]). More about such problems in *Med. Soc.,* Vol. III, chap. viii.

[42] Jerusalem: JTS, Geniza Misc. 15. Palestine: TS 13 J 22 f. 10*v*, l. 9. For the Iraqian dandies, cf. Serjeant, *Islamic Textiles,* XV–XVI, 78–79, and Mhammed (*sic*) Farid Ghazi, "Un group social: les Raffinés," *Studia Islamica,* 11 (1959), 39–71. For a general study of the Arabic notions on colors, see Alfred Morabia, "Recherches sur quelques noms de couleur en Arabe classique," *Studia Islamica,* 21 (1964), 61–99, with a bibliography on the subject.

[43] Prayer carpets (*musallayāt,* with *s* instead of *ṣ*, the writer most probably was an Iranian): ULC Or 1080 J 77, ll. 22, 27, 30; TS 12.133, ll. 11, 19, 23–24. *Siglaton* is a medieval French and English term for the *siglāṭūn,* a fabric of heavy damask (cf. Heyd, *Commerce du Levant,* II, 700). Lead-colored (*raṣāṣī*): a color popular in the Geniza. According to Heyd, the siglaton used to be of one color, namely *dark* blue. In all the inventories of synagogue property, where the siglaton was used not for clothing but for covering walls and columns, it had two colors (light-green and blue-black, white and red, white and black, and so on), S. D. Goitein, "The Synagogue Building and its Furnishings . . . ," *Eretz-Israel,* 7 (1964), Eng. summary, p. 171. "Open" color: *maftūḥ.* According to A. Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Française* (Paris, 1935), p. 47, in Syria today *baṣalī* designates the color of the onion skin; according to the context, however, the reference here is more likely to the violet gray of an onion cut open.

[44] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 47 *.

[45] TS 12.12.

[46] *Qirmizīnī:* TS 13 J 27 f. 4, l. 8; *za'farānī:* TS 16.272*v*, l. 17; *sammāq:* TS 20.92, sec. C, l. 6+*; *arjawānī:* TS Box K 15, f. 66, col. I, l. 5 and often; *munayyir:* TS 13 J 24, f. 14; TS Box K 6 f. 177. In some cases, the reference might be to merchants specializing in the coloring matter. In others, the names appear in lists of receivers of alms or payers of the reduced poll tax, which suggests that they belonged to the working rather than to the merchant class. From *zinjār,* verdigris (oxidized copper), the rather common name of a profession, *muzanjir,* is derived: TS NS J 76, col. I; TS NS J 98*v;* TS NS J 434; also mispronounced *mujanzir:* TS Box J 1, f. 47 (1234). This compound certainly was used as a greenish dye.

[47] *Al-ma'rūf biṣabgh al-ḥarīr al-fayrūzī:* TS 13 J 4, f. 11.

[48] E.g., purple: TS NS J 150; indigo: TS Box K 25, f. 153.

[49] During transport or customs formalities some pounds of silk were lost, for at the end there were only 63 pounds, despite the fact that fabric normally gains weight while being dyed.

[50] A small quantity of silk was dyed with colors other than crimson; the account does not specifiy the cost of the coloring matter and the wages with regard to this item.

[51] Gottheil-Worrell, XIV, p. 72, ll. 1–8. In l. 8, the MS has *'kḥl,* i.e., *akḥal,* black with bluish luster, as antimony.

[52] Jewish *ḥibrāwīs:* TS Box K 15, f. 66, col. I, l. 4; Mosseri L 245, l. 10.

[53] *Ṣa'igh:* e.g., Ceuta in Morocco: TS 12.3; Mosul in northern Mesopotamia: TS 20.128*v*, 18; Maimonides, *Responsa,* II, 433; Bentov, *op. cit.* (above p. 411, n. 15), p. 425. Rendered in medieval Hebrew by *ḥārāsh,* Mann, *Texts,* I, 74 n. 25. *Dhahabī:* F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden, 1952), p. 30 n. 8. Dhahabī in the Geniza: e.g., TS 16.116 (proprietor of a house in Old Cairo, eleventh century); TS 16.138 (dissolution of a partnership in Alexandria, 1077); PER 45 (a release, Old Cairo, 1019), ed. S. Assaf in *Tarbiz,* 9 (1938), 197; TS 8 K 22, f. 1, ed. Mann, II, 320; Gottheil-Worrell, XIII, p. 70, l. 44. Dozy, *Supplément,* I, 687, has the word under *s.m.nṭārī,* which Yāqūt, quoted in M. Amari, *Biblioteca Arabo-Sicula* (Leipzig, 1857), p. 113, l. 5, explains as *dhahabī* according to Maghrebi usage. Persons called *s.m.nṭārī* (once written with ṣ) are mentioned in TS Box K 15, f. 29, as buyers of *'abīr,* a perfume. *Fiḍḍī,* "silverman," occurs very rarely, e.g., Gottheil-Worrell, XIII, p. 70, l. 51, and might refer to a person trading in silver.

[54] TS Box K 15, f. 48, col. I, l. 6; TS Box 25, f. 103, l. 43, *India Book* 208. Today in certain parts of Yemen, *ḥallā'* is the common word for gold- and silversmith. For Spain: Dozy, *Supplément,* I, 319*b* (from al-Maqqarī).

[55] Caster (*sabbāk*): TS Box K 15, f. 47; TS Box K 15, f. 85, col. I, l. 14. Hammerer (*ḍarrāb*). Cast copper (*sabīka*): Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 26*v*, ll. 11–13; hammered copper (*maḍrūb*): TS 12.291, l. 16. The terms are particularly common in the India trade. The term "caster" is used also for persons working in the mint. This may apply also to the ḍarrāb, although this is not evident from the Geniza.

[56] Tinner (*qazdīrī,* from Greek *kassiteros*): Gottheil-Worrell, IX, pp. 44 and 46, ll. 7 and 16, (*ya'mal al-qaṣdīr*): TS Box K 15, f. 96, col. IV, l. 27.

[57] Worker and/or dealer in lead (*raṣṣāṣ*): TS Box K 15, f. 102, l. 7 (a workman); TS 13 J 19 f. 4 (a merchant). *Maṭbakh* for processing lead: TS 12.606, l. 1.

[58] Preparers of litharge (*martakī*): TS Box J 1, f. 4*c*, l. 25; Box K 15, f. 50*d*, col. I, l. 15. The English word is Greek and means "silverstone," the Arabic word is Persian, meaning "impure stone," both designations referring to the silvery color of this material.

[59] Bell-makers (*jalājilī*): e.g., TS 8 J 26, f. 19, l. 5, ed. S. D. Goitein in *JQR*, 44 (1953), 43 n. 19; ULC Or 1080 J 113, l. 2. Not yet noted in an Arabic dictionary. About the obligation to suspend brass or iron bells on the necks of beasts carrying water, cf. *Ma'ālim al-Qurba*, Eng. summary, p. 97. For Milan, 1288, cf. Lopez-Raymond, *Medieval Trade*, p. 62.

[60] Blacksmith (*ḥaddād*): TS 8 J 22, f. 10*v*, l. 1, *Nahray* 3 (the blacksmith from Baghdad); ULC Or 1080 J 152 (from Qayrawān, it seems), TS 8 J 19, f. 24, l. 17+ (in Old Cairo). "The man doing iron work" (in Heb.) (TS 20.163) obviously came from Palestine. *Bayṭār*, which sometimes is translated as farrier, in the Geniza only means veterinarian.

[61] Locksmith (*aqfālī*): TS Box K 15, f. 10 (two locksmiths, brothers, contributing to a public fund); Dozy, *Supplément*, II, 384*b*, has found the word only in a nineteenth-century dictionary. Makers of locks from wood (*ghalaq*): *najjār al-aghlāq*, "lock-carpenter": TS 8 J 13, f. 18, l. 7; more common, *ghallāq:* TS 12.684*v;* TS 12.462, l. 3 (966 A.D.), ed. S. Assaf in *Tarbiz*, 9 (1938), 204; TS 20.6, l. 12 (1037), ed. Assaf, *op. cit.*, p. 30. Cf. also TS 16.49 (979 A.D.), ed. S. Assaf, *Yerushalayim* (1953), p. 110, where the same persons as in TS 12.462 are mentioned. In *Ma'ālim al-Qurba*, Arabic text, p. 236, and TS Box K 6, f. 44*v*, l. 27 (1247) the wooden locks are called *ḍibāb*. The craftsman manufacturing them is called *ḍabbāb* in TS 18 J 1, f. 3 (1006).

[62] Cutler (*sakākīnī*). Spoon-maker (*malā'iqī*): TS Box K 15, f. 48, col. III, l. 3 (a Persian). A maker of hooks as used by butchers (*ṣanānīrī*): TS NS J 151; of razors (*mawwās*): TS 8 J 16, f. 27*v*, l. 11. Needle-maker (*abbār*): TS Arabic Box 30, f. 67; TS 12.362, ll. 8, 11+. For the latter, cf. *Ma'ālim al-Qurba*, chap. 57.

[63] Maker of mortars (*hāwinī*): TS 13 J 8, f. 14, l. 2 (contributor to a charity, early eleventh century). Street of the Canister-Makers: *darb al-zanājīliyyīn*, cf. Casanova, *Reconstruction*, I, 15.

[64] Tinker (*sha''āb*): TS 16.134, ll. 23–24 (fall, 1044); TS NS J 133*v*, ll. 5, 15 (1093).

[65] Thirty-seven bales of glass, sent by three Jewish firms from Tyre, are referred to in a document dated 1011: TS 13 J 33, f. 5, ed. S. Assaf in *Tarbiz*, 9 (1938), 196. Red glass from Beirut: Westminster College, Frag. Cairens 9*v*, ll. 28–29, *India Book* 50.

[66] Baron, *History of the Jews*, IV, 168 and 319. Cf. also *Monumenta Hungariae Judaica* (Budapest, 1959), no. 864, about a glass foundry of Spanish Jews in Fogaras, Transylvania (today Romania) in 1697, quoted by J. Komlós, *Kirjath Sepher*, 35 (1960), 465.

[67] Indirectly, this aspect is evident in a query sent around 1134 from Aden to a religious authority in Old Cairo, where it was asked whether translucent Chinese porcelain could be regarded as glass for ritual purposes (cf. TS 8 J 37, f. 1, *India Book* 33).

[68] Glass vessels in stores: DK XX; TS Box K 15, f. 9; TS 12.525; Maimonides, *Responsa*, I, 137.

[69] TS 16.116 (1[0]10 A.D.). The name of the Christian glassmaker was Malīḥ. The last explanation of Jewish prominence in glasswork was suggested

to me by Dr. Richard Ettinghausen, then Head Curator of Near Eastern Art, the Freer Gallery, Washington.

[70] Local glass, as opposed to red glass: JTS, Geniza Misc. 27.

[71] University Museum, Philadelphia, E. 16517, l. 10, described by S. D. Goitein in *JQR*, 49 (1958), 47; TS 13 J 14, f. 2, l. 8, *Nahray* 17.

[72] TS 13 J 22, f. 10*v*, l. 11.

[73] Clay-worker (*fakhkhār*): ULC Add 3340*v*, l. 3 (Jews in Spain, 1130), ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz*, 24 (1955), 145; TS Box K 15, f. 100*v*, ll. 7, 12 (Old Cairo). Pottery sent from Rosetta: DK 22*v*, l. 20, Nahray 194. *Fākhūrī:* TS Box K 6, f. 106. *Fākhurānī:* ULC Or 1080 J 29 (family name of a cupper in Alexandria, twelfth century). Cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, II, 245*a*. Earthenware for Passover: TS Arabic Box 54, f. 56*v*, ll. 25, 31.

[74] Potter (*qaddār*): TS Box K 25, f. 244*v*, l. 33 (as a low profession). TS 13 J 26, f. 18, ll. 10–12 (export from Tinnīs). TS 13 J 17, f. 3, ll. 16–17 (a Mr. Potter as proprietor of a ship).

[75] *Kūzī:* TS 13 J 36, f. 11; *ghaḍā'irī*, family name in Baghdad, thirteenth century: *Diwan of Elazar ha-Babli*, ed. H. Brody (Jerusalem, 1935), p. 94.

[76] TS 13 J 27, f. 17, l. 19, not contained in the section edited by S. D. Goitein in *G. Levi Della Vida Jubilee Volume* (Rome, 1956), pp. 395–398, 403–405. Dozy, *Supplément*, I, 387*b*, has the plural *makhāfī*.

[77] TS 20.128*v*. In certain parts of Yemen today, *maddār* is simply a potter. It is noteworthy that Spiro, *Dictionary of Modern Arabic*, and Qāsimī, *Métiers Damascains* (see p. 415, above, n. 1) do not note this word at all.

[78] A maker of leather bottles, *baṭṭa*, e.g., for flour, TS 13 J 25, f. 2, is invariably called *baṭṭāṭ*, TS 24.76; TS Box K 15, f. 66, col. I*a;* TS Box K 15, f. 96, while *Ma'ālim al-Qurba*, Arabic text, p. 229, has *baṭaṭī*. Lane of the Bottle-Makers (*zuqāq al-baṭṭāṭīn*): e.g., TS 12.264.

[79] TS Arabic Box 54, f. 88; TS 10 J 16, f. 25.

[80] The Geniza has both *sarrāj* (TS 12.545*v*, l. 13; TS 20.187; TS 13 J 35 f. 7*v*, l. 1) and *sarjī* (TS Box K 15, f. 18, l. 17). *Sarrāj* also has meanings other than saddler (cf. Dozy, *Supplément, s.v.*) and for *sarjī* one expects *surūjī*.

[81] Three words for shoemaker in one document (*iskāf, ḥadhdhā', kharrāz*): TS Box K 15, f. 14. There are more. Cork shoes (*aqrāq*): ULC Or 1080 J 77, l. 31 (20 pairs ordered by fashionable people).

[82] Baron, *History of the Jews*, IV, 166–167.

[83] Parchment, *riqq*, imported from Tunisia to Egypt: TS Arabic Box 18(1), f. 101, l. 4; TS 12.362, l. 5, *Nahray* 238.

[84] Parchment-maker (*ruqūqī*): TS Box K 15, f. 102, col. II, l. 8 (in receipt of 4 loaves of bread, perhaps not as a destitute person, but as drawing part of his emoluments from the community in kind, as did other officials in such lists). Also *raqqāq*, spelled with Imāla *rqyq:* TS Arabic Box 54, f. 66*v*, l. 4. Cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, I, 545*b*. Bookbinder (*mughallif*): TS 13 J 20, f. 11 (in al-Maḥalla). Book covers (*100 jild kutub murabba'*): TS 8 J 25, f. 19, l. 15, *Nahray* 40 (second part of eleventh century). Gilded shoes: TS 8 J 22, f. 18, l. 10 (slightly earlier). The book list: TS 16.19 (ed. S. Assaf, *Kirjath Sepher*, 18 [1942], 277).

[85] TS 13 J 18 f. 16*v*, l. 3 (from *Malīj*). Paper as container: see above, p. 334.

[86] TS Arabic Box 18(2), f. 4, ed. Assaf, *Texts*, 45–49.

[87] Stonecutter (*ḥajjār*): Mosseri L 87, l. 11, *Nahray* 11 (family name); Bodl. MS Heb. b 3, f. 22 (Cat. 2806, no. 20), ll. 7–8 (same). Mason (*bannā'*): *passim*. Layer of clay pipes: above, n. 73; of floor tiles (*muballiṭ*): often.

Wall-plasterer (*mulayyiṭ*): TS 8 J 11, f. 7*b;* Bodl. MS Heb. b 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 5, l. 39. Marble-worker (*rakhkhām*): TS 24.40, l. 47 (family name). Maker of ovens (*tannūrī*): TS 13 J 28, f. 24, l. 13 (family name); of cesspools (*ḥashshāsh*): TS Box K 15, f. 45. Decorator (*muzayyin*): TS 18 J 2, f. 18, l. 21. Stucco- and other workers, above, p. 96. *Muzawwiq* in documents dated 982: TS 16.142, ed. Mann, *Texts,* I, 363; 1027: TS NS J 51, l. 2; 1026–1027: TS 8 J 6, f. 18; all, it seems, referring to different members of one family. The same family name appears in the thirteenth century: ULC Or 1080 J 113, l. 4. Since the *Ma'ālim al-Qurba,* Arabic text, p. 237 ll. 13–16, emphasizes that the *dahhānūn* (painters in oil) should be prohibited from painting figures, it is likely that this practice was then still alive.

88 TS 8 J 5, f. 12, where the *muhandizīn* are dealing with a dispute about a house. Westminster College, Arab. II, f. 79: a scholar called son of the *muhandiz.* TS Box J 1, f. 47, col. III: *muhandis* (with *s*), April, 1234, mentioned in a communal account.

89 Carpenters and sawyers employed in buildings: TS Box K 5, f. 76; TS K 15, f. 45; TS K 15, f. 100*v*, ll. 13 and 17; ULC Or 1080 J 104. Doors made in a carpenter's shop: TS 8 J 7, f. 18*.

90 Turners (*kharrāṭīn*): TS Box K 15, f. 58, l. 13 (as contributors); TS 13 J 9, f. 5 (the son of the turner signing a document in 1047). The Gate of the Turners: TS 12.525 and 16.72, cf. Worman, *JQR,* 18 (1905), 26. The Street of the Chest-Makers (*ṣanādiqīn*): TS 13 J 3, f. 9.

91 Worman, *JQR,* 18 (1905), 30–32. In addition to the mills situated inside the city mentioned there (one adjoining the house of the Head of the Congregations, cf. *ibid.*, p. 32), there was one in the immediate vicinity of the house of the Nagid: TS 13 J 25, f. 19. A miller as a contributor to a public appeal: TS Box K 15, f. 18, l. 14.

92 TS 8 J 4, f. 18*c* (Alexandria, 1102); TS 8 J 10, f. 17 (Old Cairo, 1133).

93 Seller of flour (*daqqāq*): TS 13 J 25, f. 2. The writer left with him a pawn to get a leather bottle full of flour. Fine flour was called *naqī*, literally pure: TS 12.793, l. 22 ff., *Nahray* 148. Two persons called daqqāq appear in a list of taxpayers: TS Box K 15, f. 96, col. II; another in TS 24.76 (receivers of loaves). A female *daqqāqa:* TS 24.76, l. 33.

94 This is evident from many lists of distribution of loaves to the needy and to community officials, e.g., TS Box K 15, fs. 5, 15, 39, and 50. One distinguished between *khabbāz*, baker (extremely common), and *farrān,* literally "oven-man," most probably a person who did the baking but not the preparation of the dough: TS Arabic Box 51, f. 107; TS NS J 293; Gottheil-Worrell, XVI, p. 82.

95 TS Box K 15, f. 43 (contributor); TS Box K 15, f. 54, col. III, l. 14 (paying rent): TS 13 J 24, f. 14, l. 14 (traveling from Alexandria to Cairo); verso, l. 5 (greetings to the elder Zikri al-Ka'kī).

96 John Rylands Library, Manchester, Gaster Collection A 1192. "Ringlets": *ḥulayqāt.* not yet traced in a dictionary, but known as a place-name in Palestine.

97 *Khamīrī:* TS Box 15, f. 2, col. II, l. 3. This word, too, seems not to be listed in the dictionaries. Khmīrī, however, is a family name in Egypt up to the present day. Cf. also Dozy, *Supplément,* I, 404*b*, for *khāmirjī* in the same sense. In Persian *khamīra* is either dough or a conserve flavored with the aroma of roses or violets.

98 Ibn al-Ḥājj (d. 1336), *al-Madkhal,* I, 239, quoted by Strauss, *Mamluks,*

I, 183. Sahl b. Maṣlīaḥ, *Epistle to Jacob b. Samuel*, trans. L. Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology* (New Haven, 1952), p. 110.

[99] *Harrās* was pronounced *hurrās:* BM Or 5566 D 24, l. 11, *India Book* 89, where some Cairene Jewish merchants who made trouble in Aden are described as having lost face because of eating in the houses of Samaritans, Karaites, and *hurrāsīn;* TS 18 J 1, f. 6, l. 16 (the son of a *harrās* doing work similar to his father's in 1028); TS Box K 15, f. 14, col. II, l. 2 (payer of reduced poll tax). It is interesting that the Spaniard Ibn 'Abdūn uses this form, cf. *JA*, 224 (1934), 297, while *Ma'ālim al-Qurba*, Arabic text, p. 108, has *harā'isī*. This harīs(a) was different from its ancient Arabic and present Yemenite namesake (above, p. 72).

[100] *Jashshāsh:* Bodl. MS Heb. f. 56 (Cat. 2821, no. 16), f. 45*v** and 46; *Shawwā:* TS 20.76, l. 4 (name of the proprietor of a ship in Tunisia; cf. in detail *Ma'ālim al-Qurba*, Arabic text, p. 92); *'ashshī:* BM Or 5566 C, l. 25+ (his daughter receives alms); *ṭabbākh:* often, e.g., TS Box K 15, f. 14, col. I, l. 8 (one from Baghdad, pays reduced poll tax); TS Box K 15, f. 50*c*, col. II, l. 18 (receives two loaves), Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 68 (fourteenth century; meaning here perhaps butcher). In Ibn 'Abdūn (*op. cit.*, see preceding note), p. 242, the *ṭabbākh* is a caterer at weddings; in *Ma'ālim al-Qurba*, p. 102, he prepares cooked meat, as opposed to the "roaster," see above. Boiled, unseasoned meat was prepared by the *nashīlī:* TS 10 J 13, f. 3. *Bawāridī*, literally "maker of cooling or cold vegetables," cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, I, 68*b*, and *Ma'ālim al-Qurba*, p. 96: TS 13 J 18, f. 29 (a letter addressed to Mr. B. in Alexandria). *Kāmukhī* (voweled thus and not kāmakhī), very common family name of at least two clans, one being Kohens, one not, e.g., TS Box K 15, f. 70, ed. Mann, II, 247 (eleventh century); TS Box K 15, f. 50*c*, col. II, l. 17 and *d*, col. II, l. 14 (twelfth century); TS Box K 15, f. 36*v*, l. 9 (thirteenth century). *Muṭarrī:* TS 13 J 6, f. 27*; TS Arabic Box 6, f. 28, l. 7. The *bayyā'*, above, p. 152, also belongs here.

[101] Butcher (*jazzār*): very frequent, e.g., TS 20.175*v*, l. 21 ("near the butcher's shop in Old Cairo"); TS Box K 15, f. 13, col. I (renting a store belonging to the community, 1183-1184); TS Box K 15, f. 34 (a contributor); TS NS J 173, l. 11, ed. D. H. Baneth in *Tarbiz*, 30 (1961), 174 (family name of a bibliophile). Meat-seller (*laḥḥām*): TS 13 J 19, f. 30 (mentioned in letter); TS Box K 15, f. 36*v*, l. 15 (contributor). Slaughterer (*dhabbāḥ*): TS 13 J 22, f. 2, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Sefunot*, 8 (1964), 111–113* (a respectable Kohen); slaughterer of goats (*dhabbāḥ al-mā'iz*): Box K 15, f. 96; meat-carver (*qaṣṣāb*): TS 24.14 (financial transaction in 1122). For the separation of goat's flesh from beef or mutton, cf. *Ma'ālim al-Qurba*, chaps. 15 and 20.

[102] Cf. Siegmund Fraenkel, *Die Aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen* (Leiden, 1886), p. 38: *nuqāniqā*. Sausage-makers: *Ma'ālim al-Qurba*, chap. 14.

[103] *Ma'ālim al-Qurba*, Arabic text, p. 113.

[104] "The Ḥāvēr from Baghdad, the *zalabānī*": TS 13 J 21, f. 17*v*, ll. 5–6+*, see above, p. 92. *Ma'ālim al-Qurba*, p. 112.

[105] S. D. Goitein in *JQR*, 49 (1958), 37 n. 5.

[106] TS 16.79, ed. Isr. Abrahams, *JQR*, 17 (1905), 428 (possessor of a house), TS Box K 15, f. 66*v*, col. II, l. 2 (payment of poll tax); TS 10 J 15, f. 4, l. 11, *Nahray* 66 (family name of a Muslim merchant).

[107] TS Box K 15, f. 47 (family tree of Ibn Qālī).

[108] TS 16.272*v*, ll. 9 and 15: *Ibn al-Thallāj*, a community leader in Alexandria at the time of Saladin. About the enormous sums spent on ice, cf. Mez, *Renais-*

*sance*, pp. 381 and 408, and Goitein, *Studies*, p. 239 (10,000 dirhems for one pound).

[109] See sec. 5, and chap. iv, *passim*.

[110] Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 104–105; for details, see p. 270, above.

[111] TS 13 J 3, f. 6*v**.

[112] ULC Or 1080 J 119, l. 13: *wājib ḥall ḥarīr wa-naqḍ*. For the technical terms see, p. 104, above.

[113] The most important industrial tax in Fustat, which brought 1,500 dinars, was called *khātam al-sharb*, "the seal on fine linen."

[114] TS NS J 396. More details in *Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, chap. vii, sec. C.

[115] Dropsie 395, ll. 10–11: *ujrat al-qand wa-wājibuh*. Sugar was boiled several times, according to the quality desired, cf. *EI*[1], *s.v.* "Sukkar" (J. Ruska). The town is called al-Minya. No doubt, Minyat Ziftā is meant, which had large sugar workshops (TS 24.25, ll. 25, 31).

## 5. AGRICULTURE AND FISHERY

[1] Ghaza: TS 12.147, ll. 4–5 (March 15, 1051). The scribe Ḥalfōn b. Manasse: ENA 4020, f. 30*. Maimonides, *Responsa*, II, 611.

[2] Immigrant from Baghdad: Hillel b. Eli, ENA 4020, f. 30*. Newcomer from Palestine: the judge Nathan b. Solomon, letter to him from his cousin (TS 12.312), who sends him "some of the wheat" and asks for instructions on which price the rest should be sold. A number of other instances in *Nahray*.

[3] TS 20.99, ll. 32–33 (around 1090).

[4] TS 28.6, sec. A (dated 1079). The fields were in Dammūh and were attended to by a "gardener," *khawlī*, called Khayrūn.

[5] TS NS J 27, sec. 2 (dated 1143). The payments due were called *murattabayn*, the first consisting of 9 waybas of wheat, the second of 8, instead of which 75 dirhems were remitted in cash.

[6] Both details in DK 245, ed. Samuel Kandel, *Genizai kéziratok* (Budapest, 1909), no. I, ll. 23–24 and 30–32. The town concerned probably was Minyat Ziftā. Cf. TS 18 J 3, f. 1, where, it seems, the same Nāṣir al-Dīn is referred to. Payment in cash and grain: Claude Cahen, "Le régime des impôts dans le Fayyūm ayyūbide," *Arabica*, 3 (1956), 12.

[7] TS Box K 15, f. 6 (July, 1178). The donations ranked from ¼ to 3 waybas (3-¾ to 45 liters).

[8] Gottheil-Worrell, XXVII, p. 118, l. 20 (around 1060) ("wheat given as a loan like dinars").

[9] Dropsie 395, margin.

[10] "Farm" as designation for village: e.g., TS 18 J 3, f. 1. Vice versa, in medieval Hebrew, a farm would be called a village, so that one would speak about a *kefār* of fruit trees (Assaf, *Texts*, p. 102 n. 2 [quotation from Isaac al-Fāsī]). Kalbashā: TS 10 J 17, f. 23*v*, l. 3.

[11] TS 13 J 9, f. 4, ed. Assaf, *Texts*, p. 110. With regard to Ḥammūriyya, a village near Damascus, the word *qarya* is used instead of *ḍay'a* (TS 13 J 8, f. 25*v*). This, however, may have been a part of the village's name.

[12] TS 12.243, l. 17, *Nahray* 139. The letter was written in Minyat Sammanūd and obviously referred also to Ṭaṭay (TS 8 J 19, f. 11, *Nahray* 138), and Damsīs (TS NS J 13, *Nahray* 137).

[13] TS 18 J 4, f. 24, ll. 13–18, referring to *Khārāb Fazāra* as a village with a deputy judge (cf. above, p. 280).

[14] PER 24 (Damsīs), ed. S. Assaf in *A Tribute to Alexander Marx* (New York, 1943), pp. 73–77.

[15] TS 13 J 11, f. 9, ed. Mann, II, 119 (Ṭaṭay).

[16] E.g., TS 16.232; TS 18 J 2, f. 6; TS 12.708; TS 12.31.

[17] E.g., TS 10 J 9, f. 16; TS NS J 42*; TS 13 J 26, f. 19*. Dispute between the proprietor and the manager of a farm: TS Arabic Box 18(1), f. 183.

[18] *Qiṣṣat al-Miṣrī wal- Rīfī:* AIU VII C 16 and 123. *Al-fallāḥ istakramahu ṣāḥib ḍay'a jalīl:* TS 8.58.

[19] TS 10 J 29, f. 5, l. 8 (letter from Jerusalem, written by a Palestinian).

[20] Barley: TS 24.78+*; ENA 4020, f. 30*. Maqrīzī, I, 44, l. 4 from bottom.

[21] Bodl. MS Heb. b 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 10, ll. 25–27, ed. Joseph Eliash in *Sefunot*, 2 (1958), 18. A similar document, TS 12.147, which also deals with the state of crops in the Ghaza district, is incomplete. The barley of the Ghaza district used to be exported to England for brewing beer.

[22] Marius Canard, "Le riz dans le Proche Orient aux premiers siècles de l'Islam," *Arabica*, 6 (1959), 113–131.

[23] *Shikāra ruzz* in a *rizma:* TS 20.122*v*, l. 34; rice and lentils destroyed by the *usṭūl*, or warship, of the enemy: Bodl. MS Heb. b 13, f. 49 (Cat. 2834, no. 30), l. 39. Both letters are from the middle of the eleventh century.

[24] ULC Or 1080 J 17, l. 9, *Nahray* 85. Thus rice obviously was grown in northern Syria (cf. Canard, "Le riz" [above, n. 22], p. 125 n. 7).

[25] TS Box K 15, f. 53, col. III, l. 4. According to the same letter, 32 dirhems then were worth 1 dinar, see App. D, sec. 12. For the cultivation of rice in the Nile Delta see Canard, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

[26] Dār al-Aruzz: TS 12.660, ll. 8 and 12 (around 1120) (cf. Worman in *JQR*, 18 [1905], 17). Not included in Casanova, *Reconstruction.*

[27] Numbers 11:5. R. Le Tourneau, *Fès avant le protectorat* (Casablanca, 1949), p. 390 n. 8, quoting G. Salmon, *Noms de plantes en arabe . . .* (1906), p. 70. Greengrocer (*khuḍarī*): e.g., TS Box K 3, f. 22 and Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 47*b*, col. I, l. 22+ (in both cases as contributors). Seller of vegetables, in particular beans and so on (*baqqāl*): e.g., TS Box K 15, f. 43 (contributor), also H. Z. Hirschberg, *I. Baer Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1961), p. 145. An often-mentioned street, *darb*, was named after the baqqālīn in Old Cairo (Casanova, *Reconstruction*, Index). Store for oil and leguminous plants (*qaṭānī*): TS 12.525 (partnership). The documents referring to the grocer called *fāmī* contain no details concerning the products handled by him: below, p. 438, n. 13. Alexandria: DK 2.

[28] Linseed oil was mostly called "hot oil" (*zayt ḥārr*): e.g., TS 8 J 21, f. 29, l. 18 (sent from Old Cairo to Alexandria); and sometimes it was called "seed oil" (*zayt bizr*): TS 13 J 15, f. 5, l. 18 (an urgent order for it, sent from Damascus to Old Cairo). The inventory of the store mentioned in the preceding note (TS 12.525), lists as its main assets linseed oil and olives, but not olive oil. Linseed oil for lighting appears regularly in accounts of expenditure on synagogues (e.g., TS Box K 3, f. 11). Olive oil was also used for this, of course (cf. same account and TS 8 J 11, f. 7*a*, l. 2). For consignments of *marīnatayn zayt ḥarr* ordered from Aden by different persons at different times, see *India Book* 50, ll. 31, and 148, l. 20; *marīna* appears solely in this connection.

[29] For buying sesame a merchant of Qalyūb near Cairo once went to Minyat Ziftā and its environs and another time to Diyār Baḥrī, the northern Delta (cf. TS 13 J 23, f. 21*v*, ll. 2–3, *India Book* 130, and TS 20.80*v*, ll. 41–49, *India Book* 273). Maker of sesame oil (*shīrājī; often spelled shīrajī*): e.g., ULC Or Add 3358, ed. Assaf, *Texts*, p. 29 (Ramle, Palestine, dated 1039); TS 18 J 5, f. 9 (Old Cairo, 1040); TS 8 J 25, f. 3 (on the way from Tunisia to Egypt, same time); TS 20.47, l. 31 (cf. E. J. Worman in *JQR*, 20 [1907-1908], 453); DK XIX (around 1110). "Sesamist" (*sumsumī*): TS Box K 15, f. 2, col. I (his son a receiver of alms).

[30] *Qurṭum:* TS 12.31. *'Aṣfur:* e.g., TS 12.434 (bought in Old Cairo and sent to Alexandria); Gottheil-Worrell XIV*v*, ll. 1–2, p. 74 (one hundred pounds cost 29 dinars).

[31] *'Uddat al-zayyātīn:* TS 28.6, sec. C, l. 15. It was common to invest a daughter's dowry partly in industrial undertakings. *Baddī:* TS 13 J 3, f. 18.

[32] Bodl. MS Heb. f. 27 (Cat. 2642), ed. Assaf, *Texts*, p. 101. This is a book of formularies, based on actual contracts.

[33] Above, p. 118 (TS NS J 42*).

[34] Trade in dates: TS 13 J 16, f. 12, ll. 4–27⁺; TS 10 J 32, f. 10, l. 8⁺. Although in one case four partners were involved, one has the impression that it was only an occasional purchase. For *qūṭatain ya'qūb*, cf. TS NS J 27. With this naming of a variety of dates as "Jacob," may be compared the name *Yūsuf effendī*, "Mr. Joseph," of mandarins, common today.

[35] From Tripoli, Lebanon: TS 8 J 9, f. 27, top, *Nahray* 84; ULC Or 1080 J 17, l. 4⁺. From Lādhiqiyya, Syria: TS 13 J 16, f. 19, margin⁺. From the West: TS 8 J 19, f. 24, l. 16⁺. *Fāriqī:* TS 8 J 27, f. 2, l. 13, *Nahray* 95. Cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, II, 260*a*.

[36] TS NS J 42*, where mention is made also of the *nabq*, or ziziphus tree. Sycamore as timber: e.g., Bodl. MS Heb. b 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 5, ll. 6 and 19.

[37] In Tinnīs, in lower Egypt, during a famine, people had nothing to eat but carobs: TS 10 J 6, f. 2, ll. 6 and 14, *Nahray* 219. One hundred pounds cost 2 dinars in Alexandria (late-eleventh century): TS 13 J 16, f. 19, margin⁺. Sent to a traveler: TS NS J 127. The prices mentioned: 3-½ qīrāṭs and ¾ dinar (early-eleventh century).

[38] *Al-mūzī:* TS 13 J 6, f. 10*v*, l. 2. *Al-mawwāz:* above, p. 80. Bananas in Jerusalem: S. D. Goitein, "Jerusalem in Arab Times," *Yerushalayim* (in Heb.) (Jerusalem, 1953), p. 99. In Old Cairo: Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 368, l. 9. Watermelons: ENA 1822, f. 2.

[39] Shelled almonds from Sicily, 1050 pounds: TS Box 28, f. 37 (around 1040); 25 "Sicilian" pounds: TS 16.7, l. 10 = 20.76*v*, l. 2 (from Qayrawān). Shelled almonds are often mentioned. Hazelnuts, 3 loads, worth 34 dinars: TS Arabic Box 30, f. 215, col. IV, l. 5*; sent as a present together with almonds from Alexandria to Fustat: TS 8 J 26, f. 5. The same with pistachios: TS 13 J 16, f. 2*v*, l. 1. Walnuts and prunes coming from Suwaydiyya, the port of Antioch: TS Arabic 18(1), f. 164, ll. 7–9. Five loads of (dried) peaches sent from Acre to Fustat: ULC Or 1080 J 42, l. 19.

[40] Sellers of dried fruit (*naqliyyīn*): TS Box K 15, f. 36. A naqlī as contributor: K 15, f. 61 col. I, l. 4.

[41] "Appleman" (*tuffāḥī*): TS Box 28, f. 199, Jerusalem, middle of eleventh century. The main contribution in kind to the budget of the caliphate made by Palestine during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd (786–809) consisted in apples.

See also Mez, *Renaissance*, chap. 24, p. 408. Wahrmund, *Handwörterbuch*, I, 333*a*, has *tuffāḥiyye, Obsthaendler* (fruiterer).

[42] E.g., TS 12.525 (dated 1104): three bottles, *qaṭarmīzāt*, valued at 1-½ dinars; ordered together with five hundred pounds of sugar, in Old Cairo, to be processed in Alexandria: TS 10 J 15, f. 4, top⁺.

[43] ULC Or 1080 J 101 (bought in a "perfumer's" store).

[44] Maimonides-Meyerhof, p. 5, no. 1.

[45] TS 13 J 8, f. 25*v*.

[46] TS 13 J 4, f. 4*v*.

[47] TS 13 J 13, f. 27, ll. 20–21. The word used here for gardens: *jinān*.

[48] TS 16.222*.

[49] TS 10 J 4, f. 11, ed. Assaf, *Texts*, pp. 158–159.

[50] 1161-1162: TS 8 J 33, f. 10, sec. 2, trans. S. D. Goitein in *Eretz-Israel*, 7 (1964), 96. Maimonides: TS 10 J 20, f. 5⁺. Bustānī: TS 8 J 5, f. 10*v*, col. IV (making an agreement with a glassworker, dated 1133); TS NS J 293 (receiving a *jūkhāniyya* from the community, dated 1140).

[51] Quoted by Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 368, ll. 11–14.

[52] Winegrower (*karrām*): TS 8 J 32, f. 3 (dated 1162). Vineyards called "fields" (*ghīṭān*): TS 6 J 2, f. 14. The vineyard of the governor: Bodl. MS Heb. b 3, f. 16*v* (Cat. 2806, no. 15), ll. 6–11.

[53] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 13, ed. Assaf, *Texts*, pp. 102–103.

[54] Bodl. MS Heb. f 27 (Cat. 2642)⁺, see above, n. 32.

[55] An autograph responsum by Abraham Maimonides dealing with this injunction is preserved in Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 84, ll. 6–8. It is almost identical with the one printed in Abraham Maimuni, *Responsa*. p. 56.

[56] Presser (of grapes) (*ʿaṣṣār*): TS Box K 15, f. 106, l. 19 (a contributor, around 1130); TS NS J 151 (also a contributor, about a hundred years later); or *ʿāṣir:* TS 18 J 5, f. 5, l. 40, *India Book* 49, where Ibn al-ʿĀṣir of Old Cairo is the proprietor of a factory of world-famous textiles.

[57] Dropsie 395*v*, margin (around 1100); TS 13 J 21, f. 13, margin; TS 13 J 18, f. 8, l. 34. Baskets for pressing grapes: TS 13 J 19, f. 27⁺ (*mishannatayn lil-ʿaṣīr jiyād yikūnū nāʿima yinṭawū*, ordered from Ṭaṭay). For Palestine: cf. Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte*, IV, 364.

[58] TS Box J 1, f. 1, col. III, l. 13: ʿAtīq al-khallāl. TS NS Box 306, f. 1, l. 19: *dār al-khall bi-darb al-Ḥarrānī.*

[59] E.g., TS 8 J 6, f. 14*a* (dated 1241); Casanova, *Reconstruction*, Index, *s.v.*

[60] Milkman (*labbān*): e.g., TS 13 J 4, f. 4; TS Box K 15, f. 48, col. III, ll. 11–12; very common. Also: *ḥallāb,* as family name of a proselyte: TS 10 J 13, f. 10*v*, l. 6.

[61] TS 13 J 35, f. 5*; TS 13 J 9, f. 10*.

[62] The so-called *mushāṭara* (Assaf, *Texts*, p. 101). (From Spain, but known all over the Muslim world, and already in vogue in Talmudic times.)

[63] TS 12.708.

[64] Bashmūr: Bodl. MS Heb. b 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 11; al-Ashmūn: TS 10 J 7, f. 6*d*, sec. 1.

[65] Cheese from Palestine: e.g., TS 10 J 6, f. 14; TS 10 J 19, f. 16.

[66] Rennets (*manāfiḥ*): TS 13 J 24, f. 17, l. 14. A cheese-maker (*jabbān*), sold them separately, perhaps to housewives. Special cheeses: *kaysī* (in Bashmūr, see n. 64); *mishsh*, a cheese made of buttermilk and curds by the *mashshāsh:* TS 13 J 4, f. 2 (dated 1218) (cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, *s.v.*);

*makhlūṭ*, mixed, most probably with herbs, from Crete: Christ College, Cambridge, Abrahams Coll. 10, l. 10. *Ḥālūm*, salted cheese: TS 8 J 27, f. 11*.

[67] Maker of butter (*zubdī*): TS Box K 15, f. 54, col. I, l. 6 (payment of rent).

[68] E.g., TS Box K 15, fs. 21, 36, 58 (two different men), and 64.

[69] Keeper of a poultry yard (*qunnī*): TS 13 J 26, f. 8, ll. 8, 20 (family name of a captain, *ca.* 1065). Two *qunn's* sent: TS NS J 3. Scholar keeping chickens: TS 12.312, ll. 15–16. In an agricultural exhibition, arranged by the British in the Aden Protectorate near the Yemenite border, the Jews specialized in poultry (Hugh Scott, *In the High Yemen* [London, 1942], p. 38).

[70] Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie*, II, 136–137, 523–524. Export from Palestine: TS 10 J 15, f. 19, l. 5; TS 12.792*v*, l. 1, *Nahray* 9.

[71] Beekeeper (*naḥḥāl*): TS 12.636 (around 1125); ENA 4011, f. 52 (dated 1147); Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 47+; TS 16.159 (dated 1214); Bodl. MS Heb. b 3 (Cat. 2806), f. 6 (also dated 1214); Bodl. MS Heb. b 12 (Cat. 2875), f. 8 (dated 1216); Westminster College, Frag. Cairens. Misc. 43*v*. The beekeepers referred to in the last four documents seem to be members of one family. Cf. also next note. Scrapers of honey (*naḥḥālīn qashshāṭa*): TS 13 J 13, f. 18*v*, l. 1. Seller of honey (*'assāl*), very frequent: e.g., TS 13 J 2, f. 10 (1103); TS 13 J 2, f. 12 (1105; it seems, the son of the one mentioned in the document of 1103); Gottheil-Worrell, XIII, p. 70, l. 47; TS 13 J 28, f. 6, l. 8, *Nahray* 130; also *'asalī:* TS Box K 15, f. 18, l. 17 (it seems, thirteenth century); and *mu'assil:* TS 8 J 4, f. 14*d* (Tyre, 1098).

[72] AIU VII E 21, ll. 21–23. Benhā, Lower Egypt, is mentioned in this letter, which seems to have been written in a place nearby.

[73] TS 13 J 26, f. 19*.

[74] Gottheil-Worrell, L, p. 256, l. 106 (Moses de Trani).

[75] ULC Or 1080 J 109*v*.

[76] Benhā: TS 13 J 4, f. 9. Two pots with *shahd* from Minyat Ziftā: TS 12.581.

[77] TS 13 J 15, f. 19, l. 11 (eleventh century); TS 13 J 19, f. 17, l. 3 (1140), ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz*, 28 (1959), 354; TS Box K 6, f. 44, l. 1 (1247) and often. Street of Waxmakers: TS 16.146 (1143), *India Book* 286.

[78] E.g., Ibn Duqmāq, I, 41–44, Strauss, *Mamluks*, I, 185. This predilection perhaps developed out of the early connection of Jews with the production of honey.

[79] Qayrawān: TS Box 28, f. 37. Denia: Mann, *Texts*, I, 207 (from a literary source).

[80] TS 24.25, ll. 25 and 81 (dated 1163–1164). It is not evident whether the sum of 8 dinars referred to the whole period of two years or was the yearly rent.

[81] *Ibn al-qandiyya:* TS 8 J 19, f. 25, l. 16, and verso, l. 14; TS 10 J 12, f. 26, l. 16, *Nahray* 5 (merchants). About sugar molasses, an important product of the sugar industry, see below, p. 463, n. 134.

[82] TS 13 J 6, f. 11 (dated 1265). It is doubtful whether the adjective "the maker of rose marmalade" refers to the legator or to his father.

[83] Zūm al-Qaṣaba: BM Or 10 656, f. 17 (cf. *JQR*, 49 [1958], 37 n. 5).

[84] Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 367, l. 30 (*ṣīr*). Lane, *Modern Egyptians*, chap. vii, p. 198: small salted fish.

[85] *Qaṭarmīz ṣīr maṭḥūn:* TS 12.254*v*, l. 18, *Nahray* 102; *zīr tunn tamlīḥī:* TS 20.76, margin.

[86] *Ibn al-ṣayyād* pays 8-½ dirhems rent per month in 1042–1043: TS 20.168, 1.5. *Ibn al-sammāk,* frequent: e.g., Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 2, l. 11*; Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 58. *Tawwān:* TS 18 J 2, f. 13; *tunnī:* TS 8 J 5, f. 4*d* (dated 1124); whether the former designates the catcher, and the latter the seller of tuna fish, cannot be made out. Maker of carp pickles (*bunni*): TS 8 J 22, f. 18. It seems that *al-bwny,* which occurs quite frequently, in most cases is *al-bunni* and only exceptionally *al-būnī* (from Bona in Algeria). *Ibn al-Ḥītānī:* Mosseri L 130, l. 9+. The name *qardūsī* seems to refer to the fish *qardūs:* TS 20.169, l. 44; BM Or 5542, f. 6, l. 4, cf. Mann, II, 78.

[87] Catchers of (purple) shellfish: TS 16.272, l. 24; TS 13 J 24, f. 4; TS 18 J 3, f. 5, l. 37. Always in the plural; thus the singular may be *maḥ(ḥ)ārī* or *maḥḥār.* The letter refers also to the Crusaders who do not allow Jewish ritual slaughtering in the city of Acre. Haifa as fishing place for the purple shell: Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie,* I, 554.

## 6. PROFESSIONS OF WOMEN

[1] Details in *Med. Soc.,* Vol. III, chap. ix.

[2] TS 8 J 10, f. 17 (dated 1133)*.

[3] TS NS J 68.

[4] Lane, *Modern Egyptians,* chap. vi, p. 194.

[5] "Bride-comber" (*māshiṭa*): above, p. 414 n. 9; in Yemen called *shāre'āh* (Goitein, *Jemenica,* p. 17, no. 83). Muslim: Mann, *Texts,* II, 76–78.

[6] *Qābila:* TS Box K 15, f. 34; TS 20.112. Ibn al-Qābila, a common family name.

[7] Wet nurse (*ẓi'ra* [for classical *ẓi'r*]): TS 13 J 16, f. 2, l. 20. See Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Āthār* (Cairo, A.H. 1355). Strauss, *Mamluks,* I, 334–335.

[8] TS Box K 15, f. 66 col. II, l. 3; f. 96, col. II. TS 24.76, l. 26. Oculist (*kaḥḥāla*): TS 13 J 28, f. 10*v*, col. II. Specialist for the removal of hair (*ḥaffāfa*): TS 8.166.

[9] TS Box K 15, f. 50*c*, col. I, l. 10 (dated 1107; she gets 3 loaves of bread, either as a community official or as a needy person). TS Box K 15, f. 97, col. II (a payment to a woman teacher, who kept an orphan in her house). TS 8 J 11, f. 7*b* (dated 1183; school fees for the son of a woman teacher). Teaching embroidery: TS 12.493, l. 7. Women as teachers in schools: *Med. Soc.,* Vol. II, chap. vi, and Goitein, *Education,* pp. 69–72.

[10] TS Box K 15, f. 48, col. II, l. 12: *munajjima.*

[11] Spinners: TS NS J 275, ll. 17–20, *Nahray* 257. Silk: TS 13 J 1, f. 22 (dated 1091; the document is from Palestine, where the pound was about six times as heavy as the Egyptian pound normally occurring in our records); Maimonides, *Responsa,* I, 85, 92; Dropsie 400, l. 8 (according to the context, *minsaj* is an implement for weaving, and not a frame for embroidery, as in later times, cf. the picture in Lane, *Modern Egyptians,* p. 195).

[12] TS 10 J 14, f. 20, ll. 19–20.

[13] Dressmaker (*khayyāṭa*): TS 20.23*v*, l. 2 (list of receivers of alms, mostly women and foreigners). Embroiderer (*raqqāma*): Bodl. MS Heb. f. 56 (Cat. 2821), f. 49*v* (1186), see Shaked, *Bibliography,* p. 228, and S. D. Goitein in *Eretz-Israel,* 7 (1964), 96; Nābulusī, *Luma',* p. 42*. Lacemaker (*'aqqāda*): TS NS J 179*v*, l. 10.

[14] TS Arabic Box 30, f. 67, col. II, l. 20, col. III, l. 12; TS 13 J 14, f. 3.

[15] Ambergris (*'anbariyya*): TS Box NS 320, f. 7*v*, l. 8 (1126); Firkovitch II, 1700, f. 22*a* (1156). Flour (*daqqāqa*): TS 24.76, l. 33.

[16] Broker (*dallāla*): ULC Add. 3420, sec. B, l. 4 (1098). The same person is referred to in several documents, S. D. Goitein, "A Jewish Business Woman of the Eleventh Century," *JQR*, Jubilee Volume (1967), 225–242. TS 20.175*v*, l. 21 (thirteenth century). A woman as broker for books: Bodl. MS Heb. f 56 (Cat. 2821), f. 62 (Jan., 1185).

[17] *Khabbāza:* BM Or 5566 C, f. 10, l. 85, ed. Braslavsky, *Our Country*, p. 77 (a poor woman); (seller of cooked beans): ENA 2556, f. 1*v*, l. 9 (summer, 997);*naṭifāniyya* (maker of *naṭif*, a concoction of a certain plant with wine and sugar): TS NS J 24. Ibn al-sāqiya: TS NS J 51, l. 3 (dated 1027); a *sāqiya* receives a loaf of bread: TS Box 8, f. 9, col. II, l. 10 (around 1107).

[18] Ghāsilat al-Rūm: TS Box K 15, f. 15 and f. 50. Details in *Med. Soc.*, Vol. III, chap. viii.

[19] E. N. Adler, *David Kaufmann Gedenkbuch* (Breslau, 1900), p. 134. Westminster College, Frag. Cairens. Misc. 13*v*, ll. 2–3, *India Book* 96: David Maskīn Ibn *alraqqāṣa*. The word could also mean: a woman who does errands (or perhaps: one who runs around spreading rumors).

[20] TS 10 J 5, f. 8: "Moses, the cantor, the Pride of the Community, the Friend of the Academy, b. Moses" (dated 1143).

[21] TS NS J 293, col. II (1140). Goitein, "Social Services," p. 83.

[22] TS 10 J 17, f. 18, l. 7. The mother of the writer is designated as a Rūm in the address and bears an incompletely preserved non-Semitic name. Her sister is called *ryny*, cf. French *reine*, queen. Her daughter lived in a village under precarious conditions. She writes: *ana nakhdum fī kull bayt.*

[23] TS 8.23, margin, l. 1. The extensive, but fragmentary letter is in the handwriting of the judge Mevōrākh b. Nathan. See also p. 135, where a widower and father of small children wishes to acquire a slave only because he was unable to find free domestic help.

[24] The khādima of the Palestinians and her mother received 4 dirhems (TS Arabic Box 30, f. 67, col. II, l. 11); that of the Iraqis appears in a list of the poor together with the khādim (TS NS Box 320, f. 30).

[25] She was called Bint Ṭuwayr ("Little Bird"), TS NS J 293, col. I, where she gets clothing, and BM Or 5566 C, f. 10+, where she receives bread.

[26] Goitein, "Social Services," p. 71.

## 7. SLAVES AND SLAVE GIRLS

[1] Quoted by Charles Verlinden, *L'Esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale* (Brugge, 1955), I, 42. This book contains a chapter about the legal and economic position of slaves in Islam (pp. 227–239), which is now largely superseded by the extensive article " 'Abd" in *EI*[2] (R. Brunschvig). The best account about the real conditions is found in Mez, *Renaissance*, chap. xi, where, however, no sufficient distinction is made between the various social and geographical milieus. For slavery in the Jewish community during our period see Baron, *History of the Jews*, IV, 187–196 (mainly in Europe) and, in particular, S. Assaf, *Be'ohole Ya'aqov* (in Heb.) (Jerusalem, 1943), pp. 223–256; *idem*, *Texts*, pp. 166–170; *idem* in *Zion*, 5 (1940), 271–280.

[2] J. Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* (Penguin Books, 1956), chap.

iii, sec. 2, p. 68. William L. Westermann, *The Slave Systems of Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia, 1955), pp. 87–90, provides more moderate estimates, which are, however, still far in excess of what can be assumed for the Islamic Mediterranean society of the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries.

[3] E.g., TS 13 J 22, f. 33*v*, l. 11, *India Book* 84.

[4] TS 12.175, ll. 23–27. For "boy" and "young man" as designations for free employees, see p. 93, above.

[5] Bodl. MS Heb. f 56 (Cat. 2821), f. 12*v*, l. 6.

[6] ENA 2727 (Acre).

[7] Congratulation on the acquisition of a slave: Gottheil-Worrell, IX, p. 50, l. 32. The phrase *Allah yarzuquka mithlahu kathīr,* "may God give you many like him," is used for the birth of a son.

[8] Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13, l. 17 (from Qayrawān); *ibid.*, b 13, f. 50*v* (Cat. 2834, no. 31), margin (from Bilbays); *ibid.*, d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 15*v*, ll. 8–10; TS 13 J 17, f. 3, ll. 18, 21. Often in *Nahray,* e.g., no. 129, l. 12, no. 131*v*, l. 7, no. 148. "The *khaddām,* servant, of Ibn Sighmār is also leaving": ULC Or 1081 J 24, l. 14. About Ibn Sighmār, see p. 158, above. A slave called elder: see n. 82, below.

[9] ULC Or 1081 J 24, l. 11.

[10] TS 12.582, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz,* 21 (1950), 185–191. The document is unsigned and the space for inserting the year was left free, as was the custom with unsigned documents. But since the other dates given require that the first of the Jewish month Tebeth fell in that year on a Monday, it must have been 1141, for between 1115 and 1167 there was no other coincidence like this, and the other persons mentioned in the document are known to have been active during these years.

[11] Durrī: above, p. 409, n. 11. Ṣāfī: Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 78, a name also borne by free persons. *'Abdallah ghulām ṣāḥib al-sūq:* Dropsie 389*v*, l. 40.

[12] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 19, l. 13: *qārib Ṭāhir ghulām Ibn al-Tabbār.*

[13] TS 13 J 28, f. 2, l. 28. The *u* in *Jurj* is not indicated in the original.

[14] Bodl. MS Heb. b 12 (Cat. 2875), f. 32. See also n. 82, below.

[15] Pseudo al-Muqaddasī, *Le Livre de la création,* ed. Cl. Huart, IV, 38, 46, quoted by Mez, *Renaissance,* chap. xi, p. 152.

[16] Sources in the studies by Assaf cited above, n. 1.

[17] TS 16.15, ll. 3–4, ed. S. Assaf in *Zion,* 5 (1940), 274–275.

[18] Samuel Dill, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire* (Meridian Library, 1958), p. 129; Westermann, *Slave Systems* (see n. 2, above), p. 118.

[19] TS 10 K 8, f. 13, ed. Assaf, *Texts,* p. 167*.

[20] ULC Or 1080 J 281, ll. 23–25 and margin.

[21] E.g., BM Or 10 652, f. 2*, described S. D. Goitein in *JQR,* 51 (1960), 36–37; DK XXV. These three queries are addressed to Abraham Maimonides as are those quoted in the two preceding notes; DK XXV may refer to the same case as that edited by Assaf.

[22] TS Box J 1, f. 29, col. IV, ll. 1–3.

[23] TS 12.254, margin and top⁺.

[24] TS NS J 16, l. 20; Sassoon 713, ed. J. M. Toledano, *HUCA,* 4 (1927), 451,

and H. Z. Hirschberg, *I. Baer Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1961), p. 143. In the first case, *waṣīfa*, in the latter *jāriya* is used.

[25] JTS Geniza Misc. 6*. Goitein, *Education*, pp. 66–67.

[26] Kinky (*sha'ith*): TS 16.134, l. 16 (fall, 1044).

[27] TS 13 J 22, f. 2+*.

[28] TS 12.140 (dated 1145). At the age of three, she was already called *waṣīfa*. She was born in slavery, see n. 49.

[29] Goitein, *Studies*, p. 335.

[30] TS 13 J 21, f. 18: *sawdā' min al-jalb*.

[31] Maimonides, *Responsa*, I, 164.

[32] UCL Or 1080 J 110, no. 4.

[33] TS 10 J 7, f. 6*d*, sec. 2. The strange name "Quarry" was borne also by free and respected women (ULC Or 1080 J 25*v*, l. 5; TS NS J 171, l. 11; Mosseri L 268). A woman so beautiful that everyone runs after her? Hardly. Rather, this name is one of the many notions expressing a mother's disappointment at childbirth when it was a girl and not a boy: something sent by God, like a quarry.

[34] *Tawfīq:* Bodl. MS Heb. b 12 (Cat. 2875), f. 20.

[35] ULC Or 1080 J 30, *India Book* 171.

[36] Maimonides, *Responsa*, II, 373–375. The editor draws attention to Strauss, *Mamluks*, pp. 218, 235–236, where the Islamic rulings on the matter are discussed.

[37] Sitt Misk: TS 10 J 12, f. 24*v*, ll. 4, 11.

[38] Dropsie 341 (around 1070). The word used is *kūshiyyā* (Aramaic).

[39] *Milḥ* and *Na'īm:* TS 18 J 1, f. 12 and 17, the latter ed. S. Assaf in *Zion*, 5 (1940), 276–277, cf. N. Golb, *JSS*, 20 (1958), 28 n. 70. Milḥ (the ms vowels Mulḥ) of 1100: ENA 4011, f. 48.

[40] *Ḥidhq:* TS 20.93, sec. 2, and 16.188.

[41] *Rahaj:* TS 13 J 2, f. 20; ENA 4011, f. 63; Bodl. MS Heb. f 56 (Cat. 2821, no. 16), f. 46*a*. For another Nubian, cf. next note.

[42] TS 12.8, a fragment continued in TS 10 J 4, f. 9. A similar name for a slave girl was Sitt al-Sumr "Queen of the Dark Brown," most probably a Nubian (TS 13 J 22, f. 2+*).

[43] *Thabāt:* TS 8 J 12, f. 1. Greece: *Yāwān* (Hebrew).

[44] DK XIX*v*, l. 5.

[45] TS 16.70, ll. 9, 16.

[46] *Ṣalaf*, in classical Arabic the characteristic of *"la belle dame sans mercy"* (in modern Arabic: vainglory): TS 16.239, l. 3. The date is not preserved, but the fragment of the marriage contract is in the hand of Ḥalfōn b. Manasse as he used to write in the 1120's.

[47] TS 10 J 28, f. 16. The lady, Sitt al-Ḥasab, married in September, 1146: ULC Or 1080 J 49.

[48] ENA 4011, f. 62. The buyer bears the Hebrew epithet *bāḥūr*, which at that time meant junior, of lesser status, not bachelor.

[49] E.g., TS 10 J 11, f. 31 (sold for 17 dinars); TS 12.140 (see above, n. 28); TS 13 J 4, f. 2; ENA 4020 I (dated 1091), l. 11 (25 dinars); this is an incomplete, but signed copy; a complete, but unsigned copy of the same contract: ULC Or 1080 J 273.

[50] Bodl. MS Heb. c 13, f. 39 (Cat. 2834, no. 20). The "major domo" of the judge Hananel also was called Fayrūz (ENA 2727, f. 55; around 1220) and

might have been identical with the boy sold in 1175. For a third occurrence of that name see n. 83, below.

[51] *'Abīr:* TS 8 J 8, f. 4. The fragment is in the handwriting of Mevōrākh b. Nathan (1150–1181).

[52] TS NS Box 320, f. 17 (dated 1158).

[53] *Ṭā'ūs* and *Mubārak:* TS 16.20.

[54] *Sa'd:* BM Or 10 653, f. 5. TS 16.15, ll. 11, 25ᵛ: *Ẓarf,* "Elegance," and her son *Muwaffaq,* "Successful."

[55] *Muqbil:* TS 13 J 8, f. 3, dated 1152, from a city on the seashore, most probably Alexandria. The price included brokerage, sale's tax, and customs duties, which shows he was "imported." He is described as tattooed on a part of his body normally covered (*mal'ūṭ la'aṭ khafiyy*). *Muqbil* is known as the name of a slave from the letters of Abu'l-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī (cf. Mez, *Renaissance,* chap. xi, p. 161, and as that of a free (not freed) man from the Geniza (e.g., TS 12.825).

[56] TS 13 J 3, f. 3, l. 13, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Sefunot,* 8 (1964), 122*.

[57] *Wafā'* and *Janān:* Gottheil-Worrell XLV, pp. 222–225 (dated 1141–1142). The English translation is faulty and should not be used.

[58] *Nisrīn:* TS 13 J 3, f. 7.

[59] Bodl. MS Heb. f 56, f. 42*v* (Cat. 2821, no. 16), l. 11.

[60] *Saraf:* TS 12.635. For the evaluating of trousseaus see *Med. Soc.,* Vol. III, chap. viii.

[61] Tawfīq: ENA 4020, f. 11.

[62] TS 6 J 1, f. 23. Appendix D, sec. 78.

[63] Firkovitch II 1700, f. 14.

[64] Slave girl sold for 25 dinars: Tawfīq: TS NS Box 320, f. 42; "Secrecy," *Kitmān,* in 1091, ENA 4020 I (a folder different from ENA 4020, cf. n. 61); for 23 dinars: the Nubian *'lm* (*'Alam,* "Flag," or *'Ilm,* "Knowledge"?), TS 20.41 (dated 1137); for 22 and 21 dinars: see Golb, *JSS,* 20 (1958), 28 n. 70; another maidservant for 21 dinars: Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876) f. 1 (Cairo, 1207); for 20-½ dinars: one called Rahj, sold in 1152 by Japheth b Shemarya to Abraham b. Amram, ENA 4011, f. 63; for 19-½: above, p. 138; for 19: TS 13 J 5, f. 3, postscript at bottom (1150); for 18 dinars: TS 13 J 37, f. 12 ("Musk," 1164–1165); for 17: 10 J 11, f. 31, also called *'lm;* for 16-¾: Bodl. MS Heb. b 12 (Cat. 2875). f. 20 (the Nubian Tawfīq in 1100 A.D.); for 15 dinars: see Golb, *op. cit.;* TS 13 J 6, f. 7 (*'Ushshāq,* which, like other female names in the plural, is an abbreviation, namely, of *Sitt al-'Ushshāq;* she was pregnant); above, p. 137; for 14-¼: *Riḍā,* "Delight" (with an additional 4 dinars "expenses"), TS 16.15, l. 20; for 13: *Bid'a,* "Innovation," also called "Gazelle," TS NS Box 311, f. 23 (1150); for 12 māthaqīl, in 1198: TS 13 J 3, f. 16; for 10-½ dinars: above, p. 138. A thirteenth-century damaged inventory might even have 9-½ for "Attainment of Hopes," *Balāgh al-Munā,* but the reading is not sure: TS NS J 409.

[65] "Happiness": *Sa'āda,* the Sudanese *dāda* (cf. above, p. 135); TS 18 J 1, f. 30 (dated 1190); TS 13 J 3, f. 16 (1198). Nos. 2 and 3 are hardly identical, since the price in the first case was 22 dinars and in the second 12 mithqāls. In addition, different persons were involved in the two transactions. For "Turquoise" see nn. 50 (above) and 83 (below).

[66] TS 8 J 12, f. 13.

[67] TS NS Box 320, f. 42.

[68] *Nadd:* Firkovitch II 1700, fs. 14*v*, sec. B; 21*v*. sec. A.

69 TS 13 J 37, f. 12. The date of the first sale is torn away, but was 1164–1165, since it was made under the authority of the Nāsī Daniel, who was in office in these years (Mann, I, 175). The second sale was made in June, 1165. The price of this Musk was 18 dinars at the first sale; the price at the second sale is not preserved.

70 D. Neustadt, "Economic Life of the Jews in Egypt during the Middle Ages," *Zion,* 2 (1937), 225–226 (in Heb.). See also p. 211, above. TS 13 J 14, f. 4*v*, ll. 16–17, *India Book* 259, says of a merchant that he arrived back in Egypt and sold the slavegirls. Because of the defectiveness of the text, it is impossible to say whether this was a Muslim or a Jew.

71 *Rasm, ḥaqq,* or *wājib al-sūq:* e.g., TS 13 J 3, f. 7 (1148); TS 13 J 37, f. 12 (1164–1165); TS 13 J 3, f. 16 (1198). *(Ju'l) al-dalāla, ibid.*

72 *Bay' al-jalab:* TS 13 J 3, f. 7, and often, even in midst of Aramaic formulas, as in ENA 4020 I, l. 14 (1091). Defects mentioned: e.g., pp. 139 and 144.

73 Bodl. MS Heb. b 12 (Cat. 2875), fs. 20 and 32, and often.

74 E.g., TS 13 J 6, f. 7.

75 Maimonides, *Responsa,* III, 184. The editor erroneously took *wa-huwa* (l. 9) as referring to the buyer, which is impossible, as the continuation shows.

76 TS NS J 32. A most intricate case of a partly free slave—facts stranger than fiction—is to be found in Maimonides, *Responsa,* I, 178–182 (see S. D. Goitein, "Maimonides as Chief Justice," *JQR,* 49 [1959], 191–204).

77 Abraham Maimuni, *Responsa,* pp. 149–153. For the rulings of Muslim law see n. 36, above.

78 TS 20.41 (cf. n. 64): *tuqirr lī bil-'ubūdiyya.* The same formula was already in use in Aramaic: *mesadqath le'abdū,* ENA 4020 I (1091).

79 TS 13 J 14, f. 4⁺.

80 Dropsie 400, ll. 13–16: *waqad rāḥat al-jāriya Tawfīq ila'mra'at khālak afsadathā ḥattā rāḥat ilayhā.*

81 Using "the plural of modesty" (*lā nubā' li-aḥad*): TS 13 J 36, f. 11.

82 The Indian slave Bama of the Tunisian merchant and industrialist Abraham Ben Yijū is greeted in at least five letters. In some letters he is called "the elder" (*al-shaykh*), although he is referred to as "your slave" (*'abd!*), cf. *India Book* nos. 24, 56, 57, 58, 59 (another copy of letter no. 58), 60.

83 E.g., TS 13 J 33, f. 10*v*, where the slave, "Turquoise," *Fayrūz,* the slave girl, "Incense," *Nadd,* and a third, whose name is only partly legible, are greeted (dated Nov., 1167). Slave girls' greeting: TS 16.179* (styled here *ṣabiyya,* not, as in the East, *jāriya*). In the same letter from Tunisia, "the *ṣabī*" kisses the ground before his master and his mistress. The same phrase is used in any letter addressed by a free man to a judge. A wife writes to her husband: " 'Passion,' *Wala',* kisses your hand" (ULC Or 1080 J 71, l. 8).

84 Mez, *Renaissance,* chap. xi, p. 161 (see above, n. 55).

85 DK X.

86 TS 28.8: *li-rajul uṣīb bijāriya.*

87 *Diwan of Judah ha-Levi,* ed. H. Brody (Berlin, 1894), I, 40–41, poem no. 31.

88 TS 12.585 (dated 1157).

89 ENA 2727, f. 37*v*.

90 ULC Or 1080 J 71, l. 13. See n. 83, end.

91 This is not an unkind remark against her relatives, but is intended to emphasize the greatness of the servant's devotion.

[92] Ar. *tuṣāb* (*ṣwb* IV); the word had a sexual connotation (Dozy, *Supplément*, I, 850*b*).

[93] The Jewish clerk using this phrase certainly was not aware that it is taken from the Koran 17:81, where, however, it means something different: the victory of the true religion.

[94] TS Box 25, f. 107.

[95] Bodl. MS Heb. c 18, f. 38 (Cat. 2634, no. 15).

[96] TS Box J 2 (f. not marked), ed. S. Assaf in *Zion*, 5 (1940), 273–274.

[97] Deeds of manumission: dated May, 1085, *Makhlūf*, a male slave (the name was common also among free people); a facsimile in *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York, 1905), XI, 405, transliteration (without translation) by A. Marx in *JQR*, ns I, (1910–1911), 434. Emancipation of the minor slave *Munjib* in TS 13 J 30, f. 7. Three deeds of manumission of women, dated 1110, 1176, 1181 respectively, in TS 8 J 12, fs. 1–3. (8 J 12, f. 2*.) A fourth, dated 1157, is found in TS 10 J 28, f. 16. A fifth, issued in Jerusalem, 1057, was edited by L. Blau, *Die Juedische Ehescheidung*, Budapest, 1912, II, 102. TS 8 J 12, f. 4, also a manumission, is fragmentary.

[98] ULC Or 1080 J 264: *iftikāk*. Talmud Giṭṭīn 37*b* and parallels.

[99] TS 16.105 (dated 986). The masculine form of the name of the slave girl is remarkable; *Mu'tazz*, of course, was the name of a caliph. Here, it has the meaning "the one held in high esteem [by her master]" (cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, II, 123*b*). A free woman, divorced in Ṭaṭay, Lower Egypt, in 1052, was called *'Azīz*, also in the masculine (TS 8.154), but *'Azīza* is also found as name of a free woman (TS Box 28, f. 249 [in Jerusalem]).

[100] Bodl. MS Heb. f 56, f. 53 (Cat. 2821, no. 16); *ibid.*, c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 54. The full name of Munā's husband was "Abu 'l-Faraj Ibn al-Tinnīsī, the Parnas Yeshū'a ha-*Levi* b. Abraham." No Kohen marrying a freedwoman has been traced so far in the Geniza.

[101] TS 10 J 2, f. 15.

[102] TS 12.175*.

[103] Abraham Maimuni, *Responsa*, p. 149.

[104] TS Box K 15, f. 65, col. I.

[105] TS 8 J 16, f. 4*.

[106] *Faraj mawlā Barhūn*, TS 8.12, almost certainly identical with the *'atīq*, or freedman, of the uncle (or: father-in-law) of the writer of TS 12.175. *N. z. l. ly ben mawlā Ṣāliḥ:* TS 20.76, l. 29. The name is perhaps Berber. *Naṣr mawlā ben a(l)-Zubayr:* TS Box K 3, f. 36, col. I. All these were respected business agents.

[107] TS 20.47, sec. B (top, upside down). This part of the MS has not been edited.

[108] The freedman Salāma marries a free virgin in 1111: TS 24.5. Bishāra concludes a partnership in the amount of 175-⅓ dinars, to which he, as agent, contributes 20 dinars: TS NS J 6*. Mukhtār, the freedman of the Gaon of the Academy of Palestine, appears as attorney in Old Cairo: TS 10 J 23, f. 1, ed. Mann, II, 363. Miriam, the freedwoman, receives alimony from her husband amounting to 10 dirhems per month, as of September 6, 1100, but for what reason (travel, divorce) is not stated: TS Box J 1, f. 11*v*.

[109] Merx, *Paléographie hébraique*, p. 28.

[110] TS 16.133, ed. Assaf, *Texts*, pp. 140–142.

[111] TS Arabic Box 7, f. 13*v* (two lists). Called Najīb *al-ma'tūq*, which Arabic term corresponds to Hebrew *meshuḥrār*.

[112] E.g., TS Box 15, f. 13, col. III, and f. 17. In these cases (four altogether) mention is made expressly of slaves and freedwomen. There are numerous others in which persons bearing names typical for slaves are in receipt of help from public funds (e.g., ENA, Uncatalogued no. 89*v*, l. 9: *Rayḥāna*, "Basil herb").

[113] ULC Or 1080 J 258, ll. 6–8 and 19–28. About the buying of silk by the government and its laying hands on all better silk available in Alexandria, the silk bourse of Egypt, see above, p. 268. About Alexandrian fanaticism, and the irregularities committed by the government officials there, see *Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, chap. vii.

[114] Mez, *Renaissance*, chap. ii, p. 160.

## CHAPTER III: *The World of Commerce and Finance*

### INTRODUCTORY NOTE: *Periods and Countries Prominent in the Business Documents of the Geniza.*

[1] R. de Roover, "The Organization of Trade," in *Cambridge Economic History*, III, 46.

[2] For this and the following paragraph, see above, pp. 19 ff.

[3] Cf. Goitein, *Studies*, pp. 329–350.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 351. It is significant that in Maimonides' *Responsa* there are five queries concerning merchants traveling to India, to which others, referring to travels to a distant country, should be added. There are more such queries in the printed edition of the *Responsa* by his son Abraham. I found two others in the Geniza (*India Book* 169, 233).

### A. THE MERCHANTS AND THEIR EMPLOYEES

#### 1. TYPES OF BUSINESSMEN

[1] TS 13 J 20, f. 5* (dated 1150): *al-yahūdī al tājir* (he was the proprietor of a sugar factory). TS Box K 15, f. 106: *al tājir al-yamanī* (he contributed 2 dinars to a public collection). TS 8 J 40, f. 8: *al-tājir al-Baghdādī Abu 'l-Riḍā b. al-Ṣadr.* Cf. also BM Or 10588, cited in *JQR*, 51 (1960), 38. In a document dated 1160 (TS 18 J 1, f. 9) both father and son are called *tājir*. The plural (*tujjār*) is used in the more general meaning of "merchants."

[2] TS 12.371, l. 17 (the businessmen are described as being very much occupied).

[3] Dimashqī, pp. 48–54; German trans. H. Ritter, "Ein arabisches Handbuch der Handelswissenschaft," *Der Islam*, 7 (1916), 66–73.

[4] TS Box 8, f. 99, col. 2, l. 1: *ṣabbān, yabī' al-ṣābūn*. TS 20. 75*v*, l. 7: al-*ḥuṣrī; ibid.*, l. 6: *alladhī ya'mal al-ḥuṣr*. The word *jabbān* is used in the Geniza exclusively in connection with the production or sale of cheese, and not, as Muqaddasi (p. 31) suggests, as a general term for trader; see also p. 124, where further details about the cheese industry are to be found.

[5] Called *qāshsh*, e.g., TS 18 J 3, f. 5, l. 5 from bottom; or *qashshāsh*, e.g., *TS* 20.170; or *qushāshī* (voweled thus), e.g., ENA 2806, ed. Mann, II, 276

sec. (5). In MS Sassoon 713*v*, ll. 26–27, ed. H. Z. Hirschberg, *I. F. Baer Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1960), p. 143 (in Heb., a clothier, *bazzāz,* has his shop in the bazaar of the *qushāshiyīn.* In BM Or 5566, C, f. 10, ed. Braslavsky, *Our Country,* p. 82, the manuscript has *al-qushāshī* (not *al-qasha'ndī,* as in Braslavsky).

[6] Cf. DK VIII*.

[7] TS 12.525: *marsūm libay' al-zayt wal-qaṭānī.* Only a fragment of the second contract (TS 12.616) has been found thus far.

[8] A saying of Rabbi Akiba, Mishna Aboth 3:16.

[9] BM Or 5566 D, fs. 12–16.

[10] TS Arabic 54, f. 19; Westminster College, Frag. Cairens. I, fs. 55–63, *India Book* 138, 139.

[11] *India Book* 229, 300.

[12] TS Box 8, f. 66*; TS Arabic Box 40, f. 103, and TS NS J 222 (wine merchants); ENA 2727, f. 23*b*. For wholesale, cf. p. 197, below.

[13] For *fāmī,* cf., e.g., ULC Or 1080 J 9 (dated 1077, fragmentary; about partnership in such a store). TS 13 J 8, f. 1 (Sept., 1052; about settlement with a divorcée). TS Box K 15, f. 21 (his store is in a house belonging to the community). TS NS J 179 (an old list of persons). Cf. Muqaddasi, p. 31, where fāmī is listed as a general term for merchant; cf. above, p. 437, n. 4.

[14] TS Box K 15, f. 36 (three "sellers" as contributors); TS Box K 6, f. 44 (two); Dropsie 395, l. 7 (three in Sanhūr near Alexandria); B. Chapira, *Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem, 1953), p. 121; cf. also *Ma'ālim al-Qurba,* pp. 128 ff. of the Arabic text. *Bayyā' ḥimmiṣ maslūq:* Ibn Abī Uṣaybia, II, 99, l. 22; see also below, n. 43.

[15] TS 13 J 3, f. 2 (dated 1142), ed. S. D. Goitein, *Ben Zvi Memorial Volume,* in *Sefunot,* 8 (1964), 113–115.

[16] Cf. above, p. 79.

[17] TS 8 J 22, f. 8, ll. 7–13.

[18] I compiled this list after only a cursory perusal of Nahray's accounts and correspondence. There are several thousand references to be consulted, so that only a special study devoted to the subject will yield a complete description of Nahray's trading activities. Nahray was called "the Maghrebi tājir" (TS Box 25, f. 130, address, *Nahray* 142, see above, n. 1).

[19] Gottheil-Worrell XXVII, p. 121, l. 31, *Nahray* 155. The editors misunderstood the term *rubā'iyya* (Sicilian quarter dinars). Thus far we have found only one case in which tājir is connected with the name of an article of merchandise and this in a document from the thirteenth century, when the term might have lost its precise meaning: *tājir al-nīl,* merchant of indigo (Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 [Cat. 2876], f. 47, ed. E. Strauss in *Zion,* 7 [1942], 142 where *ṭl* is to be corrected to *nyl*).

[20] (*a*) *Ballūṭī, shamārī, 'afṣī, turmusānī, sumsumī, abzārī;* (*b*) *'ambarī, kāfūrī, 'ūdī, lākī, bisbāsī, rāwandī;* (*c*) *kuḥlī, ḥinnāwī, za'farānī;* (*d*) *jawharī, kharīdī, tabbār, fiḍḍī, marjānī.*

[21] TS NS J 28.

[22] See pp. 209 ff., below.

[23] R. de Roover, "The Organization of Trade," in *Cambridge Economic History,* III, 42.

[24] Cf. above, p. 149.

[25] TS 20.80*v*, l. 49, *India Book* 273.

[26] TS 8 J 39, f. 12*v*, l. 2, *Nahray* 127.

[27] P. 313, above.

[28] On the use of this maxim, see below, p. 168.

[29] ULC Or 1081 J 24, l. 14. Stores: *qā'āt.*

[30] Cited above, p. 399, n. 53.

[31] TS 10 J 9, f. 5, l. 13, *Nahray* 171.

[32] ENA 154 [2558], l. 14.

[33] Summer, 1048: TS 20.69*v*, l. 27. Tripoli, Syria: ULC Or 1080 J 17, f. 4, *Nahray* 85. Marriage: TS 16.179*. In 1055: TS 18 J 1, f. 8 (the power of attorney is given to him by his mother's brother). In 1098: ULC MS Add. 3416c, *India Book* 17 (the power of attorney is given to him by a nephew). The two letters: Dropsie 389 and TS 12.264.

[34] Dropsie 397, ll. 5–7.

[35] Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 11 (document dated 1085 in which Ibn Sighmar says: "Ten years ago I was in Qayrawān"). Letter from his wife: ULC Or 1080 J 71*. His slave mentioned: ULC Or 1081 J 24, l. 14. He visits Alexandria again in 1085: cf. Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 5.

[36] Their names: Mūsā b. Abi 'l-Ḥayy, Ibrāhīm b. Faraḥ al-Iskandarānī, Mardūk b. Mūsā, 'Awāḍ b. Hananel.

[37] Abraham Maimuni, *Responsa,* p. 196: *simsār al-yahūd* (a man deals in the sale of houses in Jewish neighborhoods).

[38] TS 12.694: about selling a quarter of a house in Old Cairo in 1139; see below, p. 184.

[39] Maimonides, *Responsa,* II, 533 (based on a Geniza fragment, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz,* 28 [1959], 191–193): *samāsirat al-bazzāzīn.* A simsār and his son had received from the merchants—Muslims and Jews—goods worth 200 dinars, and had disappeared with them.

[40] ULC Or 1080 J 64; TS NS J 299.

[41] *Samsara,* brokerage, derived from simsār, occurs too, but far less frequently.

[42] TS 12.5 and 20.152: a dallāl sending goods worth 186-⅝ dinars from Egypt to Sicily in 1058. TS 13 J 16, f. 5, l. 12: *al-munādī bisūq al-ṣawwāfīn.* TS Arabic Box 30, f. 30, col. 2: *fī (sic) sūq al-ṣarf.* TS Arabic Box 38, f. 98: *dallāl 'ala 'l-'iṭr.* TS Box K 15, f. 6 (dated 1178) and f. 43*v:* munādīs as contributors. TS 8 J 21, f. 14, ll. 4–10: silver vessels confided to a munādī for auction. TS 6 J 10, f. 2, l. 5, *Nahray* 122: a clothier "crying out" a certain commodity given to him in his store; TS 8 J 26, f. 18, l. 11*: a silk-weaver doing the same with fabrics made by him.

[43] TS 16.22: here the female brokers are called *bayyā'āt,* "salewomen," cf. above, p. 152; TS NS J 325; TS 16.239*v.*

[44] Cf. p. 129.

## 2. THE EMPLOYEES

[1] See chap. ii, 3: The Wage Earners.

[2] TS 13 J 17, f. 3, ll. 14–15, 21–22.

[3] Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 26*v*, ll. 43–63*.

[4] TS 13 J 29, f. 1 (address and letter in different hands). Cf. also Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 54, where the scribe wrote both the letter and the address, with ULC Or 1080 J 130, *Nahray* 226, another letter by the same person, where the same scribe copied the text whereas the address is written in a different hand. The script of the address is, however, similar to that of the Alexandrian merchant Ibrahīm b. Faraḥ (cf. n. 36 immediately above), so

that here we might have a case of a letter forwarded from Alexandria to Old Cairo.

[5] Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 64, l. 6: *nafaqa**.

[6] ENA 2738, f. 32 (letter to the writer's sister). Mosseri L 49 (letter to his parents): *yastakhdim al-insān sana wa'ashara bāṭil.*

[7] TS 20.69, ll. 22, 35–40, 51.

[8] ULC Or 1080 J 290: *an lā a'mal shayy illā bi'amrī.*

[9] For example, Bodl. MS Heb. c 27 (Cat. 2835), f. 82 (Jewish employee). TS Arabic Box 7, f. 32, ll. 33–34: *ṣuḥbat Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn al-Ṣiddīq al-Rasūl.*

[10] TS 8 J 18, f. 14, l. 15: *burda khalī'.*

[11] TS 8 J 24, f. 21*v*, margin: *markab ṣabīy Ben Shiblūn* (the boat of . . .). TS 10 J 32, f. 10, l. 6, *Nahray* 78, and other letters in Nahray's correspondence refer to the same boat. Ben Shiblūn himself was a shipowner (TS 12.229, l. 15; TS 16.163, l. 36*; TS 13 J 23, f. 18, l. 5). The name Shiblūn was borne by Jews (cf. TS 12.150 [dated 1005]), but here, most probably, Muslims are meant.

## B. THE WAYS OF COMMERCIAL COOPERATION

### 1. "FRIENDSHIP" AND INFORMAL "COOPERATION"

[1] TS 13 J 25, f. 18.

[2] TS 20.69, ll. 24–28 (addressed to Nahray b. Nissīm [see above, p. 153] by his mentor Barhūn b. Iṣhāq of the Tāhertī family).

[3] *Ibid.*, ll. 7–8.

[4] The references are contained in DK 13, in this sequence: l. 43; verso, l. 22; recto, ll. 5–6.

[5] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 52*.

[6] See above, pp. 332 ff.

[7] TS 20.76, margin; TS 12.248, l. 27, margin, *Nahray,* 75: "So-and-so looks after our business affairs, please buy two jars of wine and something worth a quarter dinar and send it to him as a present."

[8] Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13, ll. 31–36, 48–53.

[9] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 19, l. 5: *iqḍā* (!) *ḥawā'ij al-aṣdiqā'*; TS 10 J 11, f. 17, l. 3.

[10] TS 13 J 19, f. 29, margin, ed. S. Assaf in *Epstein Jubilee Volume,* p. 188 (addressed to Ibn 'Awkal).

[11] TS 12.366, l. 13: *lays mithlak yūṣā.* Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 17, l. 11; ULC Or 1080 J 111: *wa-lira'yak al-faḍla, al-ḥāḍir yarā mā lā yarāh al-ghā'ib.*

[12] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 20, l. 23; TS 16.7, ll. 18, 20, 25 (and often): *mā yulhimak Allāh ilayh.* TS 10 J 9, f. 3, l. 22: *mā ra'aytah.*

[13] TS 20.127, ll. 32, 39, 70; TS Arabic Box 18(1), f. 101, l. 17; Dropsie 389, l. 9.

[14] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 19*v*, l. 5.

[15] TS 12.223, ll. 11–13, 20–22.

[16] TS 12.218, ll. 6–12. The full name of this man was Abū 'Imrān Mūsā b. al-Majjānī.

[17] Dropsie 389*v*, l. 45; Dropsie 414, ll. 12, 18–19 (414 is the continuation of 389).

[18] "The elder Abu 'l-Ḥusayn Hārūn b. Yeshū'a, known as the ṣāḥib of 'Abd al-Bāqī, the perfumer" (ULC Or 1080 J 264, ll. 19–21). "I sent with the ṣāḥib of my lords, the elders Banū Musaykīn . . ." (TS 20.69, l. 32). TS NS Box 321, f. 8, contains the beginning of a will by "Hillel, known as the ṣāḥib of the late Ibn al-Sukkarī, son of Manasseh." (Dec., 1099).

[19] INA D-55, f. 14*v*, ll. 10–11.

[20] E.g., ULC Or 1080 J 290, where one of the witnesses declares that he was not certain whether the relationship between two persons was a mere mu'āmala, or one based on a formal contract. *Mujāmala qadīma:* TS 8 J 25, f. 19*v*, l. 15, *Nahray* 40. *Muwāṣala:* Dropsie 414, l. 19 (see n. 17, above).

[21] Gottheil-Worrell, XXXV, p. 162*v*, l. 3.

[22] TS 20.127, ll. 41, 27 (quoted in this sequence).

## 2. PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMENDA

[1] See above, pp. 87 ff., and p. 92.

[2] The pronunciation *shūthāfūth* instead of the accepted *shuttāfūth* is testified by ENA 4010, f. 2*v*, l. 13, *India Book* 158, where the word is written in Arabic characters (dated 1036).

[3] Maimonides, *Responsa*, I, 38, 45. 'Isqā simply means "dealings," but had assumed the specific meaning of the contract described in our text. The expression *qirāḍ betōrat 'isqā*, which in reality contains a contradiction, is mentioned in ENA 2727, f. 23*a*. The opposite expression, *'isqā 'alā ḥukm al-qirāḍ*, is found in a contract of commenda dated 1215-1216, ULC Or 1080 J 137, l. 12, *India Book* 161.

[4] Maimonides, *Responsa*, I, 148. The text states that the Muslim qirāḍ was particularly common in contracts referring to overseas trade. Other instances, *ibid.*, I, 120, II, 676.

[5] TS 12.670*v*, l. 7: *sekhar 'amālō umzōnō*, cf. Mishna B. Meṣī'a 5:4. PER H 22, ll. 21, 23, 25, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Sefunot*, 8 (1964), 115–119*: *sekhar ṭorḥo wa 'amālō;* also ENA 4010, f. 2*v*, ll. 11–12⁺.

[6] *The Code of Maimonides*, Book Twelve, trans. Isaac Klein (New Haven, 1951), p. 222 (Treatise IV: Agents and Partners, chap. v, para. 1). A good summary of the Jewish law of partnership and 'isqā, including medieval developments, is contained in E. E. Hildesheimer, *Das jüdische Gesellschaftsrecht* (Leipzig, 1930). For the relation of the commenda and its Muslim counterpart, see Lopez-Raymond, *Medieval Trade*, p. 24 n. 31, and p. 174 ff., H. R. Idris, "Commerce maritime et ḳirāḍ en Berberie Orientale," *JESHO*, 4 (1961), 225–239, A. L. Udovitch, "At the Origins of the Western Commenda," *Speculum*, 27 (1962), 198–207. The two articles contain additional bibliographical information. Mr. Udovitch is preparing a book on the Muslim law of partnership in general. Meanwhile, cf. the article "Shirka" in *EI*[1] (W. Heffening), and Schacht, *Islamic Law*, pp. 155–157.

[7] The quotation is from TS 8 J 11, f. 14, ll. 11–12. Only the right half of this manuscript is preserved. Thus, the original contained twice as many phrases to the same effect.

[8] Schacht, *Islamic Law*, p. 156.

[9] TS Box J 1, f. 1.

[10] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 18⁺.

[11] Maimonides, *Responsa*, I, 37.

[12] TS 20.96*v*, l. 20.

[13] *Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, chap. vii, sec. A, 2.

[14] TS 8 J 11, f. 14 (see n. 7, above). By a ridiculous coincidence even the names of the contractors of this model partnership were identical, both named Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā (Abraham, son of Moses), with the difference that one was from Majorca, and the other from a locality the identity of which is not preserved. For another such contract, see p. 151, above. A partnership of 1,000 dinars to which the two contribute capital and work in equal shares in TS 20.162.

[15] TS 8 J 32, f. 3*v*, l. 7: *al-'ayba alladhī yaduh wayad sharīkuh fīha fi 'l-shīl wal-ḥaṭṭ* (dated 1162). For this type of business, see above, p. 156.

[16] TS 12.250, l. 8; ENA 4010, f. 2+. See also subsection C, pp. 186–192, below.

[17] INA D-55, f. 8.

[18] JNUL f. 83*v* (dated 1132)*, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Kirjath Sepher,* 41 (1966), 274–275.

[19] TS 16.170 (dated 1095). The document is incomplete and one line contains the statement "Mr. So-and-so sells and buys with me," but the wording of the preceding and following lines, as well as the space left in the same line after the statement quoted, does not permit the assumption that the person referred to (known from other documents as a respected "trustee of the court") substituted for Amram during his absence.

[20] TS 28.17*; the weekly emolument here is called *muwāqafa,* which is *muwāfaqa,* "agreement, the sum agreed upon." Lines 27–28 seem to imply that the notable invested money in the brothers' business.

[21] ULC Or 1080 J 73.

[22] TS 12.784*.

[23] TS 12.670* (Nov. 29, 1228).

[24] 1152: Toledano 3. 1156: Firkovitch II, 1700, f. 12, sec. 2. Preferential treatment (*wa-faḍḍalahu*): ULC Or 1080 J 121 (around 1075).

[25] TS 12.461. The scholar is known from a number of dated manuscripts, among them TS 20.110*, a partnership in a weaver's workshop to which he provided the money (see App. C, sec. 5).

[26] TS 16.87 (spring, 1097).

[27] TS 8 J 6, f. 9 (July 4, 1231)*, the draft of the contract. TS NS J 268 contains the notes taken by the notary on the same day on the same matter. The expression "compensation for their work and living expenses" is in Hebrew (see above, n. 5).

[28] TS 12.5 and 20.152, where, in l. 16, the contract is called *shūthāfūth* (cf. above, n. 2).

[29] E.g., ENA 2727, f. 23A, where the contract is called 'isqā (see above, n. 3).

[30] TS 13 J 2, f. 5 (dated 1095): the commenda is called *muḍāraba.*

[31] Gottheil-Worrell, VII, p. 34, l. 11: *wadda'ā annuh muqāriḍ lā sharīk.* The printed text is full of misreadings and preposterous translations. The essence of the document is that all depositions by the claimant before Muslim or Jewish clerks in this matter were made under duress and therefore void, and that only documents signed by the Nēzer (read *'l-nzr* in l. 20, for *'l-nzh*), i.e., Nathan b. Samuel, were valid.

[32] BM Or 5563 D, ed. in Abraham Maimuni, *Responsa,* pp. 207–209.

[33] Five dirhems: (see p. 175, above). Half a dinar: *ibid.* For the concept of "the wages of unemployed" see Hildesheimer, *Gesellschaftsrecht* (see n. 6, above), pp. 97, 112, 119. See also p. 177.

[34] Contract cited in n. 18, above.

[35] Mosseri A 17: the contract is called mu'āmala, but the word is also used

loosely for partnership; the words *suknuhū fī dārihī* perhaps could also mean his rent.

[36] E.g., TS NS J 6*, ll. 9, 15, 16; ENA 4010, f. 2+.

[37] Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 64*a*, l. 6, where the Muslim term *nafaqa* is used.

[38] TS 16.203, ll. 7–8; ENA 4010, f. 2+.

[39] For the first example, see above, p. 176; for the second, PER 22, l. 21+*; for the third, see p. 176. In the originals the fractions are given in qīrāṭs, or one twenty-fourths. Managers working gratuitously as an act of piety: *Med. Soc.*, Vol. III, chap. viii, Old Age.

[40] E.g., TS 12.291, ll. 12–13, 14–16+ (addressed to Ibn ʿAwkal).

[41] TS 20.127, l. 33.

[42] TS 28.6, sec. B: the contract referred perhaps partly to a workshop. Firkovitch II, 1700, f. 13 (summer, 1156).

[43] Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 11, and *ibid.*, d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 5, which refer to the same affair (dated 1085).

[44] Cf. nn. 18, 21, 24, 25, 37, above. The contract referred to in n. 35, above, does not contain any limitation in time. The document is not a legal instrument, however, but a memo made by the manager for his own use, presumably as a draft for a contract.

[45] Bodl. MS Heb. b 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 8, ed. Mann, II, 29.

[46] ULC Or 1081 J 36.

[47] TS NS J 6, ll. 10–13*.

[48] As reported in a query submitted to Maimonides, *Responsa*, I, 41, 150–151.

[49] E.g., in the sources cited above, n. 27.

[50] Dropsie 389, l. 83. INA D-55, f. 14*v*, l. 12.

[51] Eleventh-century document: ENA 4010, f. 2+ (dated 1036); twelfth-century document: Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 8* (dated 1134); thirteenth-century document: ULC Or 1080 J 280*v* (around 1230).

[52] TS 13 J 3, f. 27 (July, 1218).

[53] E.g., ULC Or 1080 J 288 (Dec., 1152; left half torn away). The bank of Damietta: TS 13 J 6, f. 5*.

[54] TS 16.138 (Alexandria, Aug., 1077): *shirka beʿēdē gōyīm*. Hebrew *ʿēd*, "witness," is a translation of the Islamic term *ʿadl*, "trustworthy witness, notary." See *Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, chap. vii, sec. C, 1.

### 3. FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

[1] TS Box 28, f. 263, *India Book* 212. In a fragmentary contract of partnership (TS NS Box 325, f. 11) arrangements are made for a future wedding.

[2] Cf. above, p. 174.

[3] Bodl. MS Heb. b 13, f. 46 (Cat. 2834, no. 27), containing 49 lines of a highly interesting will, written and signed by Hillel b. Eli (around 1090). Beginning and date lost. Fragment of another copy, written by the same clerk, but unsigned, in TS 20.99.

[4] *Journal of Economic History*, 4 (1944), 178.

[5] Fez: Abraham and Tanḥūm, sons of Jacob (TS 12.829, ed. Mann, *Texts*, I, 123–126 [Feb., 1007]). This firm was entrusted with the transfer of donations from Morocco to the Jewish academies in Baghdad (cf. *ibid.*, p. 125, ll. 15–16). Two Tāhertī brothers of Qayrawān write to the three Tustarīs in Old Cairo (TS 12.133). Three Tāhertī brothers in Qayrawān address Ibn ʿAwkal and his two elder sons in Old Cairo (ULC Or 1080 J 248+). In a later letter, he and his three sons are addressed (BM Or 5542, f. 15+). A generation

earlier, he and his father formed one firm (TS 12.383). The brothers Berechiah of Qayrawān, who were intermarried with the Tāhertīs, sent to Ibn 'Awkal letters (TS 12.175, TS 13 J 36, f. 1, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz,* 34 [1965], 169–182). For TS 13 J 25, f. 18, a letter from a firm in al-Ahwāz, addressed to the three Tustarīs, cf. above, p. 164. The letter contains a reference to a third firm, the sons of Zakariyyā'. An early letter to the three Tustarīs is found in TS 8 J 36, f. 2. For Lebanon, TS 8.38, an eleventh-century letter of two brothers from Baalbek, exporting cheese to Egypt, serves as an example. See also below, n. 9.

The oldest example of a family partnership is contained in Saadya Gaon's correspondence from the year 921-922, where three brothers, renowned as supporters of the Gaon's Yeshiva, Abu 'l-Faraj Sulaymān, Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm, and Abū Sahl 'Ezer, have as their common address the store of their father 'Alī b. Sulaymān (Dropsie 332). A late instance is revealed in a court record from June, 1129, where Nissīm b. Benāyā and his son undertake under joint responsibility to repay a loan of 300 dinars (ENA 4011, f. 57*v*).

[6] S. D. Goitein, "La Tunisie du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle à la lumière des documents de la Geniza du Caire," *Lévi-Provençal Memorial Volume* (Paris, 1962), pp. 566–568, where, however, Barhūn's daughter is referred to erroneously as the wife of Nahray b. Nissīm. She was the wife of his father. The article speaks about five instead of four brothers because at the time of its writing the identities of Mūsā and Abu 'l-Khayr were not yet established. *'Uṣba wāḥida wakalimatuhum wāḥida:* TS 12.128, ll. 11–12. Collection for the Jerusalem academy: ULC Or 1081 J 24*v*, l. 2. See also the preceding note.

[7] In Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 9, ll. 15, 24, and 34, ed. Assaf, *Texts,* pp. 179–180, the brothers Isma'īl and Abu 'l-Khayr (Mūsā) are in Egypt, while Abu 'l-Faḍl Ṣāliḥ is in Spain. In several other letters, these two brothers are referred to as being in Egypt, while their wives and children are still in Tunisia. In ULC Or 1080 J 248, Ṣāliḥ is in Qayrawān, but in *ibid.* J 35 he is in Egypt together with Isma'īl. In DK 13, l. 17, Abū Surūr Isaac is on his way to Egypt. Thus, each of the four brothers was at one time in that country. The account of 1024: ULC Or 1080 J 291.

[8] E.g., TS 20.21 (April, 1076): release of a man who had owed 145-½ dinars to a partnership, perhaps permanent, between a father and a son. TS 16.256 (about twenty or twenty-five years later: complaint against a representative of the merchants who did not settle the accounts of a partnership between two brothers, one of whom had died). TS 12.651 (Jan.-Feb., 1130): settlement after the death of a brother, who was also a partner, with the latter's daughter and wife.

[9] E.g., DK 13, l. 13⁺: partnership of the writer with his brother and Ibn 'Awkal. TS 20.76, ll. 16–17: several partnerships with a brother in different specified commodities. We also find two Tāhertī brothers of the third generation signing as a firm (TS 16.339⁺).

[10] E.g., DK XV, ll. 13, 23*v*, l. 6: three brothers, cousins of Judah Ibn Sighmār (cf. above, p. 158), cooperating in Qayrawān and Old Cairo. Judah himself in Egypt and his two brothers in Tunisia had business relations, but no partnership, as is proved by their correspondence.

[11] Maimonides, *Responsa,* I, 150, 155: the two queries probably refer to the same case (one and three cousins respectively who continued the actual partnerships of their fathers, sharing work, domicile, and food).

[12] TS 10 J 4, f. 7.

[13] TS 13 J 19, f. 6, l. 18: *al-ḥazzān al-gādōl* (the chief cantor) ***mukhtafī***

*majra 'bnihi 'nkasar* (because of the mishap of the bankruptcy of his son). For the poll tax see S. D. Goitein, "Evidence on the Muslim Poll Tax from Non-Muslim Sources," *JESHO*, 6 (1963), 278–295.

[14] TS 12.587 (June, 1178).

[15] TS 28.7 (April, 1060). Despite its sixty-three lines, the document does not reveal the circumstances of the case. The brother is not described as dead. The Damascene family's name was Ibn Ḥirbish.

[16] Bodl. MS Heb. b 3 (2806), f. 1.

4. COMMISSION AND AGENCY

[1] Maimonides, *Responsa*, I, p. 153.

[2] Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13, ll. 58–59, and f. 13*v*, l. 2 *.

[3] TS 16.203, ll. 5–8 and margin. See above, p. 174.

[4] TS 12.5; TS 20.152; Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 9, ll. 2–6, ed. S. Assaf, *Responsa Geonica* (Jerusalem, 1942), p. 125. These three documents refer to the same journey.

[5] Soap: TS 10 J 9, f. 3, l. 15 (approximately 1060). Flax: TS Box K 15, f. 53, col. II, l. 5 (approximately same time). House: TS 12.694. Real estate brokers in general: *Med. Soc.*, Vol. III, chap. viii, sec. A. Books: Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 119. The document of the female broker (mentioned above, p. 129) is dated 1185, but states that the sale was made six years before. Sicily, 1064–1065: TS Box 8, f. 103, ll. 29–30. Būṣīr: TS Box K 15, f. 532*v*, l. 5.

Dr. A. L. Udovitch drew my attention to A. Dietrich, *Arabische Briefe aus der Papyrussammlung der Hamburger Staats-und Universitäts-Bibliothek* (Hamburg, 1955), p. 107, where a commission of 4.85 percent is assumed. But the text does not warrant that a commission is intended.

[6] See sources cited p. 435, n. 71. The word *ju'l* is also used for payments to a governmental authority, e.g., an imposition on a city in wartime (TS 16.286*v*, l. 4* [Alexandria, Oct., 1219]), or for a tax in connection with rubbish disposal (TS Box K 6, f. 44*v*, l. 11 [Old Cairo, 1247]; the laborer doing the work receives wages not included in the tax), or the word is used for fees paid in connection with a lawsuit before a Muslim court (TS 28.6, sec. A, l. 4 [1079]). In the first and last cases, the plural *aj'āl* is used. Both the expression *ju'l al-dilāla* (TS 13 J 3, f. 7, l. 13) and the circumstances in which *ju'l* occurs in connection with sales, force us to assume that the term means brokerage. The phrase *ju'l wa-samāḥa* has the same meaning as *dilāla wa-samāḥa*, or *samsara wa-samāḥa* (see p. 449, n. 25).

[7] Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 33, l. 18, *Nahray* 6; TS 13 J 18, f. 8, *passim;* ULC Or 1080 J 79, l. 23, *Nahray* 229; TS NS J 28, l. 4, and verso, l. 13; Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 64*v**.

[8] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 11.

[9] ULC Or 1080 J 55, margin, TS 13 J 14, f. 17, margin, TS 13 J 29, f. 2, l. 9, and often: *bil-qism wal-rizq*. TS 8 J 24, f. 10, margin: *biqism allāh wa-rizqih.* TS 12.5, ll. 15–16: *bimā yaqsimu 'llah wa-yarzuq.*

[10] TS 16.203*v*, ll. 4–5 (cf. above, n. 3).

## C. THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MERCHANTS AND HIS WAREHOUSE

[1] The Hebrew expression is a literal translation of the Arabic. Pāqīd in this connection does not mean "official," as in modern Hebrew, but "repre-

sentative, agent." The Karaites substituted pāqīd for *shālī'aḥ* (literally: messenger), which is the rabbinical word for agent. It is possible that the first Jewish "representatives of merchants" were Karaites, which would explain the term. The Rabbanites, too, used pāqīd in the sense of agent, though not as commonly as the Karaites. Tombstone: G. Gnoli, *Le Iscrizioni Giudeo-Persiane del Gur* (Afghanistan) (Rome, 1964), p. 23. The last but one word in l. 1 is: *ha-yāshār*.

[2] E.g., TS 24.37, ll. 44–50, *India Book* 91; ULC Or 1080 J 111, ll. 7–8.

[3] *Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, chap. vii, C. In Gottheil-Worrell, VII, p. 33, l. 7, the words *abḍa'ū ba'ḍ al-biḍā'a 'ind al-qāḍī . . . Zayn al-Quḍāt* do not mean "they invested some capital in the presence of the Ḳadi," as translated in that volume, but "they entrusted some goods to the qadi for selling them."

[4] For *qā'a*, cf. above, p. 439, n. 29. For storage in general, see chap. iv (10). The title *ṣāḥib dār al-wakāla:* Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 54 (dated 1203).

[5] TS 16.87, l. 9 (dated 1097): "He [the traveling partner] bought goods and sent them here, to Miṣr, to the dār wakāla of our lord, the illustrious qadi Abu 'l-Ṭāhir b. Rajā, for the partnership." TS 18 J 3, f. 13, l. 17, *Nahray* 68: "The money should remain with the wakīl." TS 10 J 9, f. 2, l. 14, *Nahray* 110: selling for partners. TS 8 J 4, f. 19, TS 8 J 7, f. 5, TS 13 J 2, f. 2, TS 13 J 16, f. 19, l. 18+, and elsewhere: selling in a dār wakāla. Cf. above, p. 178.

[6] Auction: TS 12.434*v*, l. 18 (*dār ben Nājiya*). Offering for sale: TS Box 28, f. 228*v*, l. 12, *Nahray* 99. European cheese: TS 20.80*v*, ll. 20–24, *India Book* 273 (*dār wakālat al-shaykh al-'Amīd Ben Kushik*). Conclusion of partnerships in the wakīl's warehouse: ENA 4020, f. 26, *India Book* 196. Notary: TS Arabic Box 40, f. 126.

[7] Ibn Muyassar, pp. 80–81. For *wld* in the last line of p. 80, of course *w'ld* (*wālid*) is to be read. This edition teems with mistakes.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 62, l. 15. For *al-biḥār* read *al-tujjār*.

[9] See *Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, chap. vii, C.

[10] Bodl. MS Heb. b 3 (Cat. 2806), f. 26, l. 32 and margin, *India Book* 193. Parallels are given in the commentary to the *India Book*.

[11] TS 12.634, *Nahray* 24; TS 24.18, *Nahray* 26 (two parts of the same document).

[12] *Ṣedāqā peqīd ha-sōḥarīm ben rabbānā m(ar) Yōnā peqīd ha-sōḥarīm* (stands security for the income from 1½4 shares in a house given by him around 1050 to his daughter as part of her marriage portion): TS Box K 25, f. 90. About Jekuthiel, a prominent wakīl tujjār active in Old Cairo at the end of the eleventh century, and his son, see *Speculum,* 29 (1954), 192. Meshullām, peqīd ha-soḥarīm, who lived near the end of the twelfth century, was succeeded by his relative Moses who was both a wakīl and a "trustee of the merchants" *ne'eman ha-sōḥarīm* (TS 20.133; ULC Or 1080 J 148). Representative of merchants Muḥsin b. Ḥusayn was known in 1026 as "the son of the sister of Sham'ān," who, too, was a pāqīd (TS 20.169, ll. 1, 45, plus BM Or 5542, f. 6, l. 5 [another fragment of the same document]); Bodl. MS Heb. b 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 8, l. 9, cf. Mann, II, 29, and 78 n. 7.

[13] TS 13 J 19, f. 10*v*. For (dār) wakāla as caravanserai see Dozy, *Supplément,* II, 838.

[14] TS 8 J 4, f. 19 (Dec. 24, 1103): dār Fahd al-wakīl in Minyat Ziftā. His son was requested to sell a bale of flax according to his own judgment.

[15] Aleppo: S. Schechter, *Festschrift A. Berliner* (Frankfort on the Main, 1903), p. 111. Damietta: Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 3*a*, l. 9, ed.

S. Assaf in *Tarbiz*, 9 (1938), 209. The Damietta origin is proved by the phrase ". . . which is situated on the tongue of the sea of Egypt" (S. Schechter, *Saadyana* [Cambridge, 1903], p. 91 n. 3), as well as by the script and language, which are identical with those of the document overleaf (dated 989). In a letter to Old Cairo from the early years of the eleventh century the addressee is advised *tadfaʿhu* [*ʿidl shamʿ*] *liman tarāhu min al-wukalā'*: TS 12.291*v*, l. 11.

[16] TS 13 J 2, f. 2, ll. 5–8.

[17] TS 8 J 27, f. 11, ll. 7–8*.

[18] TS 16.87 (dated 1097; cf. above, n. 5). Mercury: Mosseri L 191. Lacquer: TS Box 8, f. 65 (dated 1057, and perhaps referring to the qadi's father. But see the long list of business activities of Nahray b. Nissīm and Judah Ibn Sighmār which spanned the years 1045 to 1097 approximately, above, pp. 153 and 158).

[19] TS Box 28, f. 37, ll. 8–16.

[20] Cf. above, n. 12, last source; Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 54.

[21] TS 12.781.

[22] TS 20.80, l. 40, *India Book* 273: *muʿāq fī dār al-wakāla;* TS 16.256 (see above, p. 444 n. 8); TS 10 J 27, f. 4, ll. 7–10, *India Book* 9; TS 10 J 29, f. 5, ll. 12–20.

[23] Cf. I. F. Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* (in Heb.) (Tel Aviv, 1959), p. 18; Ashtor, *Jews in Muslim Spain*, I, 113. TS 12.248*v*, ll. 20–21, *Nahray* 75: Abū Zikrī al-Ṭabīb intervening as a representative of merchants at a government office. ULC Add. 3418, *India Book* 1 and *passim:* Abū Yaʿqūb al-Ḥakīm, the wakīl tujjār most often mentioned in the Geniza. In both cases, however, the words *ṭabīb* and *ḥakīm* may be family names.

[24] TS Box 28, f. 228*v*, ll. 1–6, *Nahray* 99. One sale, worth 40-14/24 dinars, brought an ʿumāla, or commission, of 20/24 dinars, another, amounting to 36-5/24 + 1/81 dinars, brought 18/24 dinars.

[25] Ramle: TS 8 J 19, f. 27*v*, l. 6, *Nahray* 84. Maimonides: TS 20.133, l. 24. Ibn Shaʿyā: TS 13 J 18, f. 16; TS 13 J 17, f. 6, margin. Cf. Mann, II, 107, l. 10.

[26] Sijilmāsī: *India Book*, chap. v, a. Ben al-Ḥarrānī: ULC Or 1080 J 111, l. 6. Ibn al-Ḥulaybī: TS 10 J 29, f. 5, l. 12; TS 8 J 19, f. 27*v*, l. 6+. ʿAqrabā: TS 28.3 (July, 1004). Cf. TS NS J 179, l. 9: Saʿīd al-ʿAqrabānī.

[27] The latest dated occurrence of the title peqīd ha-ṣōharīm traced thus far in the Geniza is from the year 1234 (TS 8 J 6, f. 8).

[28] Cf. also Goitein, *Studies*, pp. 345–348.

## D. BUSINESS PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

[1] TS 13 J 17, f. 11, l. 14; ULC Or 1080 J 55, top; TS Box 25, f. 19, l. 7, *Nahray* 1.

[2] DK I*v*, l. 11, *Nahray* 167; TS 12.434*v*, ll. 17–23; Dropsie 344, *India Book* 272, ll. 8, 22.

[3] The person: Mūsā b. Abi 'l-Ḥayy. Sitting down: ULC Or 1080 J 55 (see n. 1). Standing up (*yaqif fī bayʿihā*): TS 8 J 21 f. 29, ll. 12, 16. Standing by (*al-wuqūf maʿahum fī mā yashtarūn*): TS 8 J 19, f. 24, l. 20, *Nahray* 251.

[4] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 77, l. 17, where a merchant gives an oath *annahu lam yubiʿhā* [to his opponent, a woman] *bi'azyad ʿalā mā ajābathu fi 'l-sūq fi 'l-nidā'*.

[5] Book: Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 29, ll. 15–17. Indigo: BM Or 5542, f. 27, l. 11, *Nahray* 89.

[6] TS NS J 137, l. 9: *idhā ubī'a 'alā wajh al-sūq mā yaṣiḥḥ fīh shay.*

[7] Cf. p. 439 n. 40. Maimonides, *Responsa*, I, 104. For Monday and Thursday, cf. *Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, chap. vii, B.

[8] TS 13 J 21, f. 24, l. 11: *al-bazzāzīn*. TS 13 J 16, f. 5, l. 12: *al-ṣawwāfīn*. Above, p. 437, n. 5: *al-qashshāshīn*. TS 16.146: *al-shammā'īn*. TS 12.777: *al-abzāriyyīn*.

[9] Cf. p. 83. TS 8 J 19 f. 7*v*: *al-'aṭṭār . . . al-asākifa*. Silk on the *sūq al-kattānīn*: TS 13 J 26, f. 9, ll. 20–21, *Nahray* 227.

[10] TS 8 J 16, f. 31*v*, l. 5: *as'ār al-qālūṣ*. TS 12.538, l. 2: *bil-qālūs bāb al-kattān*. Dealings in flax at that bazaar, e.g.: TS 20.127, l. 64. TS Box J 1, f. 1, col. III, l. 5 (1058). One reference to the prices of pepper and flax: ULC Or 1080 J 130 margin⁺. Ibn Duqmāq, IV, 35: *qālūṣ kalima rūmiyya ma'nāhā marḥaban bika*, "Qālūṣ is a Greek word meaning welcome." The spelling with *s* is as frequent in the Geniza as that with *ṣ*. The Square, *al-murabba'a*, as abbreviation for *murabba'at al-'aṭṭārīn*: very common. TS 8 J 33, f. 38*v*, address: *murabba'at al-ṣarf*, Square of the Money-Changers.

[11] TS 8 J 16, f. 31*v*, l. 11 and margin; TS 10 J 15, f. 4, top⁺; TS 10 J 12, f. 26, top⁺; TS 10 J 7, f. 6*b*, sec. 2 (fall, 1159). The "House" called *dār al-māṭ*, perhaps an abbreviation of *al-anmāṭ*, carpets, is very common. TS 20.110 (1086)*. Cf. Worman, *JQR*, 18 (1905), 19. Qaysāriyya of the Perfumers: TS 8.72.

[12] Business address: TS 13 J 35, f. 7*v*, l. 5. Gottheil-Worrell, XIII, p. 70, l. 42. 'Arūs: TS 13 J 27, f. 9. Sales: Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 65, l. 10; TS 8 J 18, f. 21, ll. 8, 11–12. Accounts, and the like: TS 10 J 9, f. 21, l. 14, *Nahray* 86. First source cited in preceding note.

[13] For Old Cairo and Manbij and the similar functions of a "master of the market" and a "tax-farmer" see *Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, chap. vii, sec. C, 1, where further details are to be found. Palermo: Dropsie 389, l. 40. Tyre: TS 12.335*v*, l. 16. All these examples are from the eleventh century. For the title "master of the market" in Aramaic and Hebrew, see Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie*, II, 373.

[14] *Dār al-kattān* and *al-jawhar*: very frequent. *Dār al-ḥarīr*: TS 12.793*v*, l. 9⁺ (no transactions concluded in Būṣīr without notification from the silk exchange in Alexandria). *Zayt*: TS NS Box 306, f. 1, l. 8 (this house belonged to the Jewish community). *Sukkar*: TS 24.78*v*, l. 17⁺*. *Aruzz*: p. 426, above, n. 26. *Zabīb*: TS 13 J 7 f. 5, l. 3. *Lawz*: TS 13 J 17, f. 2, l. 6⁺. *Baraka*: TS Box J 1, f. 1, col. II, l. 6, and elsewhere. *Mubāraka*: TS 8 J 21, f. 29, l. 9. *Jadīda*: 13 J 3, f. 4* (a court session held there). *Mu'an*: Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 55, l. 21. Toll station as business address: TS 12.367 (*-jawhar*). TS 8 J 22, f. 8 (*-kattān*). The qadi of the Qālūṣ: ENA 1822, f. 5.

[15] See above, pp. 187 ff.

[16] TS 13 J 18, f. 8*v*, l. 13 (in Old Cairo). TS 12.793*v*, l. 20⁺ (sale of ten hides for 10 dirhems each in Būṣīr).

[17] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 41, l. 16 and margin, *Nahray* 2: *fī Pūrīm* (Heb.) *tataḥāyā 'l-aswāq*. Cf. TS 13 J 20, f. 10, ll. 15–17, *India Book* 279: *qabl al-Fūr*. The Purim feast precedes Passover by one month. These passages refer to Old Cairo. In a letter from Sicily to Ibn 'Awkal the writer describes how he waited in vain for good prices in al-Mahdiyya until Purim and, after having been disappointed, traveled to Palermo (TS Arabic 5, f. 1, sec. A, ll. 9, 13, 17).

[18] TS 13 J 29, f. 2 (from Qayrawān).

[19] TS 20.180, l. 14$^{+}$: *wuṣūluhā fi 'l-ṣayf wa-yuḥraq al-insān min mā yashtarīh.* This caravan left Tunisia in January (see p. 279, above). TS 13 J 28, f. 16: *qad taḥarrakat al-ma'īsha wa-huwa mawsim* (business was lively owing to the impending sailing of the convoys [before the fast of the Ninth of Ab, falling usually in July]).

[20] JNUL f. 2*v*, l. 3$^{+}$. TS 8 J 18, f. 14, l. 16 (a report from Alexandria).

[21] TS 12.275: *taḥya 'l-sūq 'ind wuṣūl al-'askar.*

[22] TS 10 J 15, f. 6, l. 8, *Nahray* 51. TS NS J 27 (1143): *insafaqat al-bay'a* (cf. Mez, *Renaissance*, chap. 26, p. 453).

[23] Letters mentioning three or more Jewish witnesses to a sale, e.g., TS 12.288, l. 11; TS 12.290, l. 23; TS Box 28, f. 37, ll. 12–15; Bodl. MS Heb a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13, l. 18. Jewish parties and Muslim witnesses are common in deeds referring to the sale or gift of houses.

[24] TS 10 J 21, f. 2. Slaves: pp. 130 ff., above. Houses: *Med. Soc.*, Vol. III, chap. viii, sec. A. Flax: Bodl. MS Heb. c 13 (Cat. 2807), f. 1.

[25] In 1058, spices: TS 20.125, l. 12; flax: TS Box J 1, f. 1, III, ll. 6–11. Ascalon: DK I*v*, ll. 12–14$^{+}$. In Tunisia, flax: TS Box J 1, f. 54; lacquer, and so on: Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 11, ll. 18–22, 48–49 and *passim*. Discount lumped together with brokerage: TS 10 J 12, f. 26*v*, l. 4$^{+}$ (*dilāla wa-samāḥa*); TS Box K 15, f. 114, l. 14$^{+}$ (*samsara wa-samāḥa*).

[26] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 11, ll. 3–6: *wa'uqīm 'alayy ba'd dhālik fi aṣfar kān fīh samḥ fīh biniṣf dīnār.* "Gift": *hiba, ibid.*, l. 57.

[27] TS 12.124, l. 29$^{+}$ (a letter to Ibn 'Awkal). Another word for reduction was *ḥaṭīṭa*, TS 8 J 21, f. 7, l. 4 (a letter from Alexandria) and *ḥaṭāṭ*, Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13, l. 41* (a letter from Tunisia). In both cases, no additional details are given.

[28] Maimonides, *Responsa*, I, 89. Cf. above, p. 151.

[29] The term for two months' deferment: *biṣabr shahrayn*, in TS 8 J 15, f. 24, l. 17, *India Book* 22 (silk), TS 8 J 19, f. 26, l. 7, and TS 8 J 21, f. 29, margin (tragacanth gum and storax). One month: DK 3, l. 10* (ten saris worth 7 dinars and 10 qīrāṭs, sold at the time of sluggish business). Four months: Westminster College, Frag. Cairens. 50*a* (antimony, 1098)*. From Pentecost to Sukkot—a little over four months: Dropsie 389, l. 63 (flax). Six months for wine: Mosseri A 111 (dated 1222). Rīf: JNUL, f. 10, l. 6. In al-Mahdiyya, the delay of payment was referred to as *bi'tuh bil-nasiyya* (from *ns'*) (DK 13, l. 14$^{+}$), which is the term regularly used in Islamic law. Qayrawān and Sūsa: TS 13 J 26, f. 9, ll. 20–21, 29–32$^{+}$. Palermo: DK 22$^{+}$.

[30] Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13, ll. 29–30*. The word translated here as "demanding payments" or "collecting" is *taqāḍā*. In the first two sources cited in n. 11, above, *iqtaḍā* is used instead.

[31] JNUL 2*v*, l. 4$^{+}$: *wa-'ana naḥriṣ fi jibāya.*

[32] ULC Or 1081 J 23.

[33] Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 50, ll. 29–31*v*, ll. 6–8. Terms used in this and many other letters: *yukhāṭib lī fi*, "Please talk for me to . . . concerning . . ." or simply: *yatafaḍḍal yaqbiḍ min*, "Kindly receive payment from. . . ."

[34] Maimonides, *Responsa*, I, 70. The phrase *bay' bil-dīnār* does not mean "for 1 dinar," but "sale against cash payment."

[35] TS K 15, f. 114, ll. 22, 16$^{+}$; DK I, margin, ll. 1–2$^{+}$ (*ta'jīl*). TS 12.290*v*, margin: *shā wazn aw ṣabr.*

[36] Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13, l. 50. Schacht, *Islamic Law*, p. 9,

n. 1; J. Wansbrough, "Venice and Florence in the Mamluk Commercial Privileges," *BSOAS*, 28 (1965), 511.

[37] Tunisia: TS 20.180, l. 23⁺. Damascus: TS 13 J 15, f. 5, ll. 5–9. Both letters are from the second half of the eleventh century.

[38] TS 16.264, l. 11: *naṣbir 'alayh ila 'l-Qayrawān*. Cf. Lopez-Raymond, *Medieval Trade*, pp. 162 ff.

[39] TS 8 J 41, f. 2*v*, l. 4, *Nahray* 191. Dropsie 389, l. 27.

[40] *A'wāḍ baḍā'i'*: TS 12.479, l. 6 (June, 1087). *'Araḍt biḥarīr tamr hindī:* TS 8 J 24, f. 7, margin. Tunisian oil: Dropsie 389, l. 54. Sicilian merchant: TS 12.366, l. 12. Morocco to Spain: Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 52*.

[41] DK XXVIII, l. 29: *al-ribḥ huwa 'ind al-shirā'*.

[42] TS 20.180, l. 29⁺.

[43] DK 14, l. 13: *qabl ṭulū' al-nās*. TS 8.12, l. 10: *qabl khurūj al-nās*. *Ibid.*, l. 12: *ilā an yarji' al-mawsim min Makka*.

[44] Alexandria: TS 13 J 21, f. 26, l. 28; Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 23, l. 45. Jerusalem: TS 10 J 19, f. 16, l. 8; TS 10 J 29, f. 5, l. 5; TS 10 J 15, f. 6, l. 15⁺. News from the West: TS 13 J 8, f. 18, ll. 14–15, and f. 18*v*, l. 9. Price list at the end: TS 16.163*; TS 20.76; and in a number of other letters.

[45] Goitein, *Jemenica*, p. 46, no. 249. *Awwal al-marākib:* e.g., TS 20.69, ll. 10–11. *Sā'at wuṣūlih:* e.g., TS 16.244, l. 21. Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 52*v*, ll. 5–6*.

[46] TS 12.434*v*, ll. 8–20.

[47] TS 13 J 25, f. 8, l. 8, *Nahray* 183.

[48] Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 23, l. 28: *awlā 'alayna mahl;* TS 12.290*v*, margin; Dropsie 389, l. 69.

[49] Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13*v*, l. 1*: *khalli shughl li-shughl*. DK XII: *min al-ḥazm al-wuqūf 'ind al-shubha*, cf. Ibn Hazm, *Épitre morale*, ed. Nada Tomiche (Paris, 1961), p. 42 n. 3. DK(1), ed. S. D. Goitein in *Epstein Jubilee Volume*, p. 194: *al-rizq fa-lays hū shay bil-ḥirṣ*.

[50] TS 12.434, l. 7: *mā af'ālak af'āl al-tujjār*.

[51] Court record from 1041–1042: Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 26, l. 52. Cheating with regard to customs: p. 344, above. For al-Ghazālī, cf. *EI*[1] *s.v.* "Tidjāra," sec. *c* (W. Heffening).

[52] TS 20.69, l. 45: *lil-dirham ithnayn, lil-dirham dirham*.

[53] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 11, l. 81: *mā kān amruh illa ḥasan ṭala' fīh qarīb min niṣf al-māl*. Bodl. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 11, l. 12: *wa-zād fīh lil-dirham niṣf bay' jayyid*. Bodl. MS Heb. b 3, f. 20*v* (Cat. 2806, no. 18), l. 3, *Nahray* 7: *wa-mā minha biḍā'a illā wa-fīhā ṣalāḥ rub' al-māl*.

[54] TS 24.46, ll. 52, 54, 64–65. The notable to whom the letter is addressed signed a document in 1076 (TS 20.21).

[55] Gottheil-Worrell, XXXVI, p. 166, l. 31*, pp. 339 ff., above.

[56] MS B. Chapira (private collection), ed. B. Chapira, *Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem, 1953), p. 121. The loan, of course, was legally a partnership. For capital investment in stores cf. above, p. 151. According to Lane, *Modern Egyptians*, chap. xiv, at p. 324, "many an Egyptian shopkeeper will sell an article for a profit of *one percent*, and even less."

[57] TS 28.17*, cf. above, p. 174.

[58] TS 8 J 32, f. 3 (dated 1162), ll. 15–18, and verso, l. 21.

[59] TS Box J 1, f. 1, col. I, l. 5 and col. IV. The passages deal with purchases. The unusual remarks about the profit were inserted by the writer by way of addition, perhaps in order to show how well he bought.

[60] Cf. p. 263, above, on capital investment.

[61] Bodl. MS Heb. b 3, f. 19 (Cat. 2806 no. 18), l. 24, *Nahray* 7, cf. also p. 332, above.

[62] TS 16.163, l. 28*.

[63] Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 2, ll. 52 ff.*; see also *Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, chap. v, C.

[64] ULC Add 3423.

[65] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 76, cf. p. 133, above.

[66] Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 50, ll. 22–27. Hypersensitivity: *qillat al-ʿaql*, "smallness of mind."

[67] TS 12.335*v*, l. 1: *nataʾammal* (with alif!) *ḥisāb maʿak*.

[68] TS 8 J 26, f. 4*v*: *wa-maʿa kitābī hādhā ḥisāb mawlāʾi*. Similarly TS Box 8, f. 103, l. 28. Letter and account, e.g., TS 20.69 (dated 1048).

[69] TS 13 J 25, f. 14, *Nahray* 129. In the calligraphic letter TS Box K 6, f. 189, a Spanish merchant residing in Jerusalem requests Abū Naṣr Faḍl b. Sahl al-Tustarī (spelled al-Dustarī) in the most humble terms (but three times) to send him an exact account and the resulting balance.

[70] E.g., TS Box 8, f. 62; *Ibid.*, f. 103; TS NS J 176; Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 11. Cf. *waraqat ḥisāb:* TS 12.479, l. 10.

[71] TS 16.339, l. 26 and top⁺, and verso, l. 24. Indemnities: TS 16.13, l. 25, and verso, l. 10.

[72] TS 12.254, l. 4⁺. Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13, ll. 45–46*.

[73] Short daftars, e.g., ULC Or 1080 J 119; TS Box K 15, f. 53; TS NS J 28, 111, 127. Longer ones: TS Box K 15, f. 55; TS NS J 198*, 200. P. Heid. 917*. Account book in the sleeve: TS 20.121, ll. 21–22.

[74] On paper (7–8″ × 5-½″): TS Box J 1, f. 1; Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, fs. 64*–65. On vellum (7-¼″ × 7-½″): ULC Or 1080 J 291; TS Box J 1, f. 54. The account books, although mostly formulated as reports to customers, were called *aṣl*, originals, because they were admitted in court, see p. 209, above.

[75] Only the magnificently written vellum sheet TS Box J 1, f. 54 is perforated solely in the fold, signifying that it was part of a real book. ULC Or 1080 J 291 and TS NS J 127 show holes both in the fold and on the sheet, meaning they were originally intended to be leaves in a book, but later on were filed like other accounts.

[76] TS Box 8, f. 103. Of the same type are, e.g., the documents listed in n. 74, except the first one, and TS Box 8, f. 65.

[77] ULC Or 1080 J 119, cols. II–IV; TS NS J 28. TS Box K 15, f. 53; TS Box 8, f. 62.

[78] TS Box J 1, f. 1; TS NS J 111, 127, 198*–200 (same writer but different sizes and times). "I asked him to look it up in the *muwāyama*": TS 13 J 13, f. 11*v*, l. 1⁺. Daftar al-muwāyama: TS 18 J 3, f. 13, l. 21⁺. *Rūz-nāmat jahbadh dīwān al-nafaqāt:* TS 10 J 12, f. 26, l. 8⁺.

[79] TS Box 8, f. 66 (*tasmiyat al-jibn*. The word is normally used for pledges at a public donation); TS K 15, f. 55; TS NS J 176.

[80] Cf. *Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, chap. v, *passim*, and *ibid.*, Appendixes A, B.; Goitein, "Social Services," *passim*.

[81] ULC Or 1080 J 130, ll. 7–8⁺. For *taghlīq al-ḥisāb*, cf. e.g., TS Box K 25, f. 240, nos. 1, 11, 12; cf. *JESHO*, 6 (1963), 294 n. 1; TS 13 J 24, f. 4, ll. 6, 8 (*taghlīq al-jawālī*).

[82] Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, fs. 64*–65.

[83] Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13, l. 45*: *ghaliṭt fī ʾl-tajmīl*. Cf. TS

Box 8, f. 62*v*, l. 10: *tanḍāf lil-tajmīl al-awwal.* Public account: Bodl. MS Heb. b 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 5*v*, l. 19.

[84] *Aṣl:* Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13*. Partnership: TS 12.606, ll. 2–3. Ramle: TS 10 J 29, f. 5, l. 17. 1099: ULC Add. 3412. Witness: TS 8 J 26, f. 6, l. 8.

## E. COMMODITIES, TRADE ROUTES, AND PRICES

[1] TS Box 8, f. 90; Maimonides, *Responsa*, II, 533–534: *matā', qumāsh, shay, sal'*. Other terms: *ḥawā'ij, baḍā'i', raḥl.*

[2] "First quality": *jayyid (ilā ghāya), khārij fī 'l-jūda* ("exceptional"), *'ālī, rafī', murtafi', ṭayyib ṣāliḥ*. Middle: *wasaṭ, muqārib (kathīr)*. Poor: *dūn, daniyy, wakhsh* (in Spain, TS 12.435*v*, l. 8).

[3] TS 12.251, ll. 5–7.

[4] E.g., ULC Or 1080 J 291. The difference in price for one hundred pounds of flax varies from a quarter to a half a quarter dinar (see above, p. 226). For the Europeans, cf. p. 46, above.

[5] *En bloc (bi-qīrāṭ wāḥid)*: TS 12.124, l. 10. Fez: TS 13 J 21, f. 12*v*, l. 5.

[6] One hundred: Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 64*v*, ll. 4–5*. Four hundred: TS 20.127, l. 25 and margin. Twenty-five: TS 20.76*v*, l. 3; TS 16.7*v*, l. 10. Spain: ULC Or 1080 J 77, *passim*. Seven hundred: Bodl. MS Heb. c 27 (Cat. 2835), f. 82. Wine: TS 13 J 22, f. 22. Bees: TS 13 J 26, f. 19*. Millstones: *Haaretz Daily* (Tel Aviv), Jan. 6, 1967.

[7] TS Box 25, f. 19, ll. 5–7⁺.

[8] TS K 15, f. 114, pp. iii, iv⁺.

[9] TS 18 J 1, f. 9.

[10] Cf. p. 140, above. "Ibrahīm, the slave merchant" (*nakhkhās*) is referred to in TS 8 J 10, f. 9, in a way that suggests he was a Muslim. The *Ben al-nakhkhaṣ* (with a *ṣ*), mentioned in TS 10 J 15, f. 33, could also have been a Muslim. But this was written in the early-eleventh century, and it is possible that such a Jewish family name was still in existence.

[11] For references to trade with Europe, cf. Index *s.v.* Europe(ans), *Rūm*.

[12] JTS Geniza Misc. 13, l. 10, and verso, l. 2. For the sources of this and the next two paragraphs, cf. also chaps. i and iv, *passim*.

[13] Sfax-Alexandria: TS 13 J 25, f. 9, l. 13, *Nahray* 181; TS 10 J 10, f. 25, l. 3, *Nahray* 192; Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13, l. 60*. TS 10 J 4, f. 2, ll. 9–10, *Nahray* 184; Tunis-Alexandria: ENA 2747, f. 5. Syrta: TS 13 J 23, f. 18, l. 15. Other references in chap. iv.

[14] TS 8 J 20, f. 2, l. 11, and verso, l. 4; TS 12.369, top, *Nahray* 165.

[15] TS 20.138: *marākib 'akka.*

[16] TS Arabic Box 18(1), f. 164.

[17] For Ḥalfōn, cf. *India Book*, chap. iv. Ḥalfōn was in Spain several times. Once, when he intended primarily to visit Morocco, his boat touched the Spanish port of Almeria before proceeding to Morocco.

[18] TS 8 J 20, f. 2, ll. 6–9, cf. n. 14 (the letter was written at a time of famine and disturbance in Egypt, which explains why the Spanish merchants were not eager to visit or to send goods there); Maimonides, *Responsa*, II, 576.

[19] Cf. the letter from Tlemçen (Tilimsān), western Algeria, TS 8 J 22, f. 23*.

[20] E.g., DK 13⁺ (writer sold silk coming from Spain and brazilwood sent

from Egypt in Qayrawān against the instructions of his partner) and TS 8.12, l. 6 (writer sent pearls on to Spain, since they had no good market in Tunisia).

[21] For Jedda and the others, cf. *India Book* 158. Of course, there were also professional India traders who set out from the western Mediterranean intentionally headed for Yemen and the Orient.

[22] Rīf: frequent. Tyre: JNUL f. 1, ll. 2, 10, *Nahray* 23. Alexandria: Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 23, ll. 36–41.

[23] Cyprus and Tarsus: Philadelphia, University Museum, E.16522, cf. *JQR*, 49 (1958), 48 ff. Cyprus silk bought in Tripoli, Lebanon: TS 8 J 19, f. 27, l. 9 and margin⁺. Seleucia, Rhodes, Chios, and so on: S. D. Goitein, "A letter from Seleucia (Cilicia)," *Speculum*, 29 (1964), 298–303*. Anṭalya: see discussion in Z. Ankori, *Karaites in Byzantium* (New York, 1959), pp. 46–49. TS 13 J 14, f. 20, ed. Mann, II, 87, was from the same man, and, as the contents indicate, was written shortly after the letter summarized in Mann, I, 88–89. Amalfi: TS 8 Ja 1, f. 5.

[24] TS 13 J 16, f. 19, margin⁺. For ziqq (skin, bag), cf. p. 334, above.

[25] TS 8 J 20, f. 2*v*, l. 1; cf. n. 14, above.

[26] See p. 276, above.

[27] TS 12.435, l. 17.

[28] Mosseri L 52, ll. 8–11.

[29] ENA 2727, f. 38. See p. 315, above.

[30] TS 13 J 17, f. 3⁺; TS 10 J 19, f. 19⁺.

[31] Cf. above, p. 343; ULC Or 1080 J 104, where 110 or 120 bales of flax are sold in Qayrawān for Yaḥyā b. Mūsā al-Majjānī; Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 26*; TS Arabic Box 53, f. 29.

[32] TS 16.7, l. 16; TS 20.127, l. 26, and margin. Yūsha' b. Nathan is addressed by Jacob b. Isma'īl and his father Isma'īl b. Jacob.

[33] ULC Or 1080 J 291. In addition to the Tunisian textiles mentioned, others were shipped against values received in previous years, for which accounts had been set up. TS 20.69: submitted to Barhūn b. Isḥāq by Nahray b. Nissīm.

[34] TS 12.254, ll. 9–22⁺.

[35] Howard L. Adelson, *Medieval Commerce* (Princeton: Van Nostrand Anvil Books, 1962), p. 181.

[36] Bodl. MS Heb. b 3, f. 22 (Cat. 2806, no. 20), l. 15.

[37] Dr. E. Ashtor is preparing a book on prices in medieval Islam, in which Geniza material will be used.

[38] For si'r, in Tunisia *bay'* is also used, which simply means sale. *Thaman* is often written in an abbreviated form. In Spain, *sawm*, p. *aswām*, designates the market price (*India Book* 106, l. 19).

[39] Mosseri L 161, l. 6: *wa-mā nadrī kayf yaqūm al-yawm li'an mā kharaj lahu si'r*. For Hebrew *'āmad*, see Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie*, II, 377. For *yāṣā ha-sha'ar*, cf. Mishna Baba Meṣī'a 5:7 ENA 4020, f. 20: *li'an ba'd al-'īd yanqaṭi' al-si'r*. Defining of the price: *taḥaddad fīhi* (the commodity concerned) *mithqāl wa-niṣf fil-raṭl*, *India Book* 104*v*, l. 5 (with regard to Almeria, Spain).

[40] Cf. the Mishna cited in the preceding note and the often repeated *ḥadīth* that one should not try to buy from a caravan before its arrival in a city, but only at the market (Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ, Buyū', and parallel sources).

[41] Mirror script: TS Arabic 54, f. 93 (Fustat, *ca.* 1034). Qayrawān: TS 16.7, l. 8, and verso, l. 13. Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 15, l. 5. The

*muhtasib,* or superintendent of the market, is conspicuous by his absence in the Geniza papers of the eleventh century (cf. *Med. Soc.,* Vol. II, chap. vii, sec. C). Therefore, it could hardly be he who was responsible for the fixing of the market prices. In Roman times, this was indeed one of the duties of the *agora-nomos,* cf. Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie,* II, 273.

[42] JTS Geniza Misc. 13, l. 9: *ana qā'id arqub al-si'r.* The two lists: TS 16.7 (see preceding note) and TS 20.76.

[43] TS 13 J 18, f. 8, ll. 4–10, and margin.

[44] *Ibid.,* verso, l. 9: *al-as'ār mā lahā qā'ida. India Book* 244, margin: *al-as'ār biyad allah.* Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Kharāj* (Cairo, A.H. 1346), p. 58: *Inna 'llāha huwa 'l-musa''ir.*

[45] Flax, oil: Dropsie 389, l. 53. Indigo, flax: JNUL f. 2, ll. 6–7+. Silk: Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 17, margin, cf. Abū Yūsuf (see n. 44), p. 57. Sugar and report about al-Mahdiyya in general: TS 16.339, ll. 18–19, 24–25+.

[46] TS 13 J 18, f. 8, l. 13; JNUL f. 2, l. 6+.

[47] TS 12.434, ll. 27–31.

[48] Sixty dinars: TS 10 J 15, f. 25, l. 15, *Nahray* 13. Fifty-five: Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 33*v*, ll. 17–18+. One hundred forty-five: TS 12.254, ll. 17–18+. Two hundred: TS 8 J 19, f. 4, l. 9, *Nahray* 69. One hundred: TS 8 J 21, f. 2, l. 8, *Nahray* 70.

[49] Its price in the twelfth century was higher. Because of the abundance of information about pepper in connection with the India trade, I treat the subject in detail in the *India Book.*

[50] Bodl. MS Heb. c 27 (Cat. 2835), f. 82, top.

[51] TS 13 J 29, f. 10, l. 6. This letter is written on vellum and is fragmentary. It might come from the 1020's. The price 60 is indicated, which in Tunisia normally meant quarter dinars. If the letter is really that early, though, 60 may mean 60 dinars for one camel load, in which case the price of one hundred pounds would be only about 12 dinars.

[52] (2) TS 20.127, ll. 50–51. (3) Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 17, l. 38. (4) TS 16.163*v*, l. 12* (*ca.* 1063). (5) TS 13 J 19, f. 29*v*, l. 5+. (6) TS 13 J 8, f. 5, margin+. (7) See n. 42, above. (8) Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13, ll. 31–36, 48–53. (9) TS 13 J 19, f. 27, l. 18+. (10) Dropsie 389*v*, l. 8. (11) TS 16.339*v*, ll. 5–7+. (12, 13) TS 12.251, l. 6, and TS 12.366, margin. (14) TS 13 J 23, f. 18*v*, ll. 3–4. (15) TS NS J 291, l. 7.

[53] Standard silk: *ḥarīr.* Superior quality: *khazz,* e.g., at a time when 10 pounds of ḥarīr cost 22–30 dinars, khazz was worth 50 (TS 13 J 27, f. 4, ll. 27–30). TS 13 J 19, f. 27, l. 8+: 1 pound of khazz cost 3.25 dinars "and would have been higher had not the Syro-Palestinian silk arrived." Inferior quality: *khazāsh* or *khashāz* or *khazzaj,* e.g., when khazz cost 36–39 dinars, khazāsh cost 10 (TS 10 J 10 f. 23, l. 12, *India Book* 251; ULC Or 1080 J 258, l. 12). *Qazz,* black and red, perhaps used more in Palestine and Egypt. *Lāsīn,* coming mainly from Sicily, but also from Iraq, was inferior, and cost 1 dinar per pound when standard silk was as high as 2-⅔ dinars (ULC Or 1080 J 119). *Ibrīsim* came from Khorāsān via Aleppo, but also from Ahwāz in southwest Iran (TS 13 J 25, f. 18, l. 12). Indian red silk, *lānas* or *lēnas,* a major item in the India trade, was strangely all but absent from the Mediterranean (TS 12.147).

*Iltiqāṭ Andalusī,* Spanish "pickups": Bodl. MS Heb. b 3 (Cat. 2806), f. 19, l. 18+, which "could very well refer to what today we would call schappe silk, which is defined as silk yarn which is produced by combing and spinning the

waste silk" (Miss Dorothy G. Shepherd in her kind communication to me, dated Jan. 13, 1961).

*Zaytūnī mujallā,* "glossy zaytūnī," in Qayrawān in 1048 cost about 1 dinar per pound. The letter (TS 20.69*v*, l. 20) says that 2,000 Egyptian dirhem weights of this fabric cost 15 dinars. Since an Egyptian pound comprised 140 dirhems, the quantity was about 14.3 pounds. The term is derived from Zaytūn, or Chuanchow, in China (cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, I, 617*a*). It does not occur in the Geniza documents dealing with the India trade, and in TS 13 J 8, f. 13, sec. B, l. 2, *Nahray* 170, 700 pounds of *zaytūnī* seem to come from the West.

For the terms *manqūḍ, maqshūr,* and *qaṭārish* see above, page 104, where the countries of origin are also surveyed. See also n. 60, below.

[54] TS 12.367, l. 16: "good Sicilian silk" sold at 1 pound for 2 dinars or less in the 1030's; TS 8 J 18, f. 27, margin, and verso, l. 1, *Nahray* 119: the price was "2–2.125 dinars" in the 1060's. Second source in n. 55: in 1151, 10 pounds were estimated at 20 dinars in Old Cairo, while in July, 1150, 5 pounds cost 10.5 dinars in Sunbāṭ, Lower Egypt (TS Box 8, f. 66*).

[55] ULC Or 1080 J 22 (*ca.* 1040)* and Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 5, ll. 17–18 (dated 1151)*. The letter TS 13 J 35, f. 15, assumes that one could make a livelihood in Alexandria with an investment of 18 dinars.

[56] E.g., Ḥayyīm b. 'Ammār Madīnī (i.e., of Palermo), who left over a hundred pounds of silk in Mazara, Sicily, for transportation to Egypt and bought another forty-five on his return to Palermo (TS 20.122, ll. 22, 29 [*ca.* 1050]). Another wholesaler in silk was the Persian Isaac Nīsābūrī of Alexandria (*ca.* 1100), cf. p. 153, above, and, a generation later, Abū Naṣr b. Abraham of the same city. See also below, nn. 58, 59.

[57] (1) TS 13 J 22, f. 30, ll. 5–22 (Nīsābūrī, see preceding note). (2) JNUL, f. 10, ll. 16–17. (3) TS 13 J 27, f. 4, ll. 27–28 (Nīsābūrī). (4) Bodl. MS Heb. b 3, f. 22 (Cat. 2806, no. 20), l. 15. (5) ULC Or 1080 J 119, col. III, l. 6. (6) TS 12.296 (Nīsābūrī). (7) ULC Or 1081 J 24*v*, l. 1. (8, 9) TS 13 J 25, f. 14, l. 12⁺, TS 8.18*v*, l. 9, *Nahray* 131. (10) TS 13 J 23, f. 21*v*, l. 4⁺. (11, 12) Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 64*v*, ll. 10, 12*. (13) TS 8 J 4, f. 14*c*, l. 5. For Alexandria as silk exchange, cf. above, sec. D, p. 448, n. 14, and TS 13 J 14, f. 9, ll. 2–3, *Nahray* 205, where a Tunisian agent, carrying silk for merchants residing in Old Cairo, is advised by his employer to sell it in Alexandria immediately after his arrival from the West. There are many other references of this nature.

[58] DK 13, l. 11⁺: Ibn 'Awkal and his two partners: 420 pounds. About the Maghrebi pound, see Hinz, *Masse*, p. 32.

[59] TS 20.69*v*, ll. 26–27: 5 pounds silk cost 7.5 dinars and 1-⅓ pounds cost 90 dirhems (i.e., 1 pound cost 67.5 dirhems), exchange rate of dinar: dirhem = 1:45. Sicilian silk: *ibid.*, l. 6 (quantity: 168 pounds and 2 ounces).

[60] TS 12.251, l. 18 (*ca.* 1030). The silk is called *jīzī*, derived from *jīz*, chrysalis (cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, I, 234*a*), which obviously designates a top variety extracted from the best part of the silkworm cocoon (cf. above p. 153). Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 61, ll. 28–29⁺: 4 pounds for 51-½ quarter dinars, including *ṭarḥ*, i.e., tare.

[61] Varieties of Egyptian flax (if not otherwise indicated, the names are derived from well-known localities):

Aqfāṣ, for Aqfahs (written thus, Ibn Duqmāq, V, 3, or Aqfahṣ, Yāqūt, I, 338) in the Bahnasā province: TS Box 25, f. 19*v*, l. 2⁺.

Ashmūnī: TS 13 J 29, f. 2, l. 10. Purchase of flax in al-Ashmūnayn: TS 12.2*v*, l. 11.

Asyūṭ: TS 16.13*v*, l. 21; TS Box J 1, f. 1, col. III, l. 5, and elsewhere.

Aṭfīḥī or Tfīḥī (with *t* instead of *ṭ*): TS 20.127; TS 16.7*v*, l. 12. A flax order from Aṭfīḥ: TS 12.215*v*, ll. 5, 12*.

Bahnasā: TS 12.248, l. 15 and top. Cf. also above, "*s.v.* Aqfāṣ." *Wanā'* in this province (cf. Ibn Duqmāq, V, 15), must also have been an important flax center, as a merchant is warned *not* to buy there (TS 12.372*v*, l. 10).

Barrānī: TS 12.366, l. 13 ("the most popular cloth in Sicily"). TS 12.372*v*, l. 10 (an order to buy this type). From TS K 15, f. 53, ll. 2–3, where *barrānī* ("outside") is opposed to *juwwānī* ("inside") it appears that this is a technical term and not a name derived from a locality.

Būsh: ENA 154 (2558) (many caravans go there from Alexandria to buy flax). TS 12.372*v*, l. 10 (request not to buy there). The place is in the neighborhood of other ancient centers of flax-growing, being situated south of Aṭfīḥ and east of Fayyūm. The taxes from Būsh, Wanā', and Maydūm were farmed out together (Firkovitch II, 1700, f. 13 [1156]).

Būṣīr: The flax produced there was the most popular with the Geniza merchants. There are countless references. The many references to Būṣīr (a name derived from that of the god Osiris), must certainly be to Būṣīr Qūrīdis at the entrance of the Fayyūm. Goods are sent from there to the Mediterranean ports via Cairo and letters are forwarded from Alexandria to Būṣīr via Cairo.

Dallāṣ, also written Dlyṣ (i.e., Dallēṣ): Common, but TS 12.372*v*, l. 10, contains a warning not to buy there.

Fayyūm: Second in importance only to Būṣīr. TS 20.127, l. 63 ("When you are in Alexandria, buy me good [*ṭayyib*] Fayyūmī"). Bodl. Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 20, ll. 21–22* ("If you find good [ṣāliḥ] Fayyūmī, the hairy one and 'the stroke with the knife' [*shu'ūr wa-qaṣ' al-sikkīn*] . . .").

Fīsha and Fīshiyya flax: Bodl. Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 17, ll. 32–33. Ibn Duqmāq, V, lists three localities bearing this name. See below, *s.v.* "Ṣanbūṭī."

Kāmil: Gottheil-Worrell, XXII, p. 98, l. 16; TS 8 J 19, f. 32, top, *Nahray* 59. TS 20.127*v*, l. 4 (not to be had in al-Mahdiyya), called here *kāmilī*. The term ("complete") obviously has a technical meaning. It cannot be derived from the name Kāmil, which was not used at that time.

Laythī: See below, n. 80.

Malāl (spelled *mālāl* in TS 20.76*v*. l. 6): Very common. The origin of this designation is unknown to me.

Mīsārī, from Mīsāra, a locality in Upper Egypt, not far from other flax-producing places such as al-Ashmūnayn and Asyūṭ: Frequent, written also *M's'ry*, i.e., Mēsārī, Bodl. MS. Heb. c 27 (Cat. 2876), f. 82, l. 19, and verso, l. 1.

Qasīs or Qissīs ("Christian minister"): TS 20.127, l. 11, 51 ff., a variety of high quality.

Qimāṭ ("bandage," "swaddle"): Common.

Ṣanbūṭī: To be had in the neighborhood of Fīsha, cf. above, *s.v.* A locality Sambuṭiyya (with *s*. not *ṣ*) (cf. Ibn Duqmāq, V, 91), is repeatedly mentioned in the Geniza and distinguished there from Sunbāṭ, the well-known town.

Sāwī, from Sāw, a locality in the district of al-Ashmūnayn: Mentioned together with Barrānī as very popular in Sicily (cf. above, *s.v.* "Barrānī").

Ṭamāwī: TS 16.163, l. 16*. Ṭamā is a locality in the Asyūṭ district (Ibn Duqmāq, V, 24).

Tansāwī: Gottheil-Worrell, XXII, p. 98, l. 16, where *ṭansāwī* is to be read for *fransāwī*. I had assumed that this variety was named for a great Muslim flax merchant and shipowner bearing the name who was frequently mentioned in the Geniza letters. But we read also: "I bought flax in Ṭansā" (Ibn Duqmāq, V, 9): TS 13 J 27, f. 18, l. 3.

Ṭanṭāwī: TS 16.339*v* l. 18⁻ (request to buy flax in Ṭanṭā). TS 8 J 19, f. 32, top⁺.

[62] TS 8 J 22, f. 10, ll. 10–11⁺. Cf. above, p. 105.

[63] TS 20.127, ll. 50–54. Profit: *khubz al-balad.*

[64] *Ibid.*, ll. 10–20.

[65] The totals are slightly lower than the sums obtained by multiplication, since a small discount was granted as usual (cf. above, pp. 196 ff).

[66] TS 12.124*v*⁺, written on vellum, as usual with old letters.

[67] TS Box J 1, f. 54.

[68] The manuscript reads 290, which is certainly a mistake of the clerk who copied the letter, for all quotations are given, as usual, in descending order. The Hebrew numerals for 70 and 90 are similar.

[69] TS 13 J 29, f. 2, ll. 9–11⁺; TS 13 J 19, f. 29*v*, ll. 3–5⁺; TS 13 J 27, f. 11, ll. 25–26; TS 12.513, a fragment that might have been addressed to Ibn 'Awkal, notes the price of 6-¾ dinars per qinṭār in Tunisia (l. 29).

[70] The number *ttw*, 415, refers to the Muslim year that began March 15, 1024. It should not be taken as an abbreviation of *(dt)ttw*, i.e., 4815, year of the Creation, corresponding to 1055 A.D., for such abbreviations were not in use at that time.

[71] E.g., 20.127 (see above, n. 63), ll. 54–57.

[72] ULC Or 1080 J 291.

[73] E.g., TS 16.7*v*, ll. 11–12, 20.76*v*, l. 6: "Qimāṭ 22–30, Mālāl 18–20 (quarter dinars)." TS 12.366, top (from Mazara, Sicily): "The price of flax went down. What I sold for 30 is now worth 26–27, other varieties 22–25." TS 12.372 margin: "The markets [in Palermo] are lively, Barrānī is worth 40–26." TS 16.339⁺: "Quiet markets. Flax 1,200–1,000 [dirhems, when the rate of exchange was 1:112]," i.e., approximately 9–10.7 dinars. TS 13 J 8, f. 5⁺, top: "First-class flax is worth 11–16 dinars the qinṭār." Dropsie 389, l. 28: "Last winter, flax cost [in Palermo] 70 (quarter dinars). During the following fall it was worth 40, and no one sold."

[74] TS 8 J 16, f. 31, margin.

[75] TS 12.227, l. 7⁺.

[76] TS 8 J 19, f. 25, l. 20.

[77] TS Box K 15, f. 53.

[78] Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 64*a*, l. 14*. About the question of how far seagoing ships went up the Nile to Old Cairo, see above, p. 296.

[79] ENA 4020, f. 20. Mūsā b. Abi 'l-Ḥayy reports to 'Arūs b. Joseph.

[80] TS Box 8, f. 65, col. III, l. 8, and col. IV, l. 6. The text has *qinṭār kattān laythī*, literally "a qinṭār of a variety of flax which is traded in Laythī weight." For laythī see Appendix B.

[81] TS Box J 1, f. 1, col. III, ll. 1–11; col. IV, sec. A 2, l. 1.

[82] Cf. Mez, *Renaissance*, chap. 24 at pp. 413–415.

[83] (1) TS Arabic Box 53, f. 11, ll. 11, 20. (2) TS 13 J 19, f. 29*v*, l. 7⁺ (where

*mnyn* is to be read for *m'yn*). (3) TS 12.251, l. 13. (4) TS 12.250, ll. 8–13. (5) TS 13 J 18, f. 8*v*, l. 9. (6) TS 13 J 28, f. 9*v*, ll. 1–2⁺. (7) TS 12.366, ll. 14–15. (8) TS 16.163*v*, l. 13*. (9) TS 13 J 18, f. 5, margin, *Nahray* 180. (10) TS 16.339, l. 28⁺. (11) JTS Geniza Misc. 13, l. 12.

[84] *Med. Soc.*, Vol. III, chap. viii.

## F. MONEY, BANKING, AND FINANCE

[1] L. Massignon, *L'influence de l'Islam . . . sur la fondation et l'essor des banques juives*. Bulletin de l'Institut Français de Damas (1932), pp. 4 ff.

[2] TS Arabic Box 4, f. 5, col. II, l. 15*: *'ayn wa-'arḍ*. *Ibid.*, l. 12 *'ayn* = dinars (around 1100); Abraham Maimuni, *Responsa*, p. 165 (Alexandria, 1209), where the translation has to be corrected accordingly.

[3] TS NS J 162.

[4] TS 12.1, l. 3* (around 1090). TS 12.479, ll. 8–9 (1087): *niqār fiḍḍa*.

[5] TS 13 J 3, f. 7: *ba'd ṣiḥḥat al-naqd wal-wazn* (1148). TS 13 J 2, f. 5: *abra'atuh min waznha wa-naqdha* (1095). Similar terms in TS 24.81*v*, ll. 12–13 (1207), ULC Or 1080 J 273, l. 12 (1226). The technical word for payment is *wazan*, while *dafa'* more generally means to hand over.

[6] TS 16.148, ll. 31–33*.

[7] Lopez-Raymond, *Medieval Trade*, pp. 15, 148. Dr. J. O. Ronall draws my attention to A. Gulak, "Banking in Talmudic Law," *Tarbiz*, 2 (1931), 160 ff., where the Roman *saculum vel argentum signatum*, "a purse, or sealed money," is discussed.

[8] TS 18 J 1, f. 11, ll. 30–31, ed. N. Golb, *JSS*, 20 (1958), 45. His name Abū 'Alī in TS 12.1, l. 5*. TS NS J 111, col. I, ll. 1–2: *bayt al-mal*. TS 16.132, 1. 7: *kīs mi-zehav bēth ha-malkhūth* (Heb.). TS Box Arabic 30, f. 215, col. IV, l. 11 and TS Box J 1, f. 1, col. II, l. 6: *ṣurrat dār al-baraka*. TS Box Arabic 54, f. 15, sec. B, col. I, ll. 17, 21: *ṣurrat al-baraka*.

[9] "Your seal": TS Box 8, f. 62, ll. 32, 40. NS J 198, col. III, l. 14. "*Maḍayt ilayh bil-danānīr makhtūma*": Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 41, l. 7⁺.

[10] TS Box J 1, f. 54, ll. 19–31. See chap. iii. E, n. 31. The 309-¾ purse: ULC Or 1080 J 104*v*, ll. 9–10 (before 1045).

[11] DK 13, l. 17. AIU VII E 93, l. 11, *Nahray* 125.

[12] TS Box K 15, f. 89 (the Muslim year 442). TS 12.281, ll. 14–15, *Nahray* 4. Moses Ibn al-Majjānī: TS 8.12⁺.

[13] TS 13 J 25, f. 8, l. 11⁺ (sent to Nahray).

[14] TS 8.26, l. 5, *Nahray* 79; TS 20.127, margin, l. 2.

[15] TS 8 J 16, f. 22, ll. 5–6, *Nahray* 147.

[16] Dropsie 389, l. 77 and top.

[17] Purses of 20 dinars: TS Box 8, f. 62, ll. 39, 40. TS NS J 198, col. I, ll. 5, 6, 25 (twice), col. III, l. 19*. Others in the same source and elsewhere.

[18] TS 8 J 19, f. 24, l. 6⁺. TS 20.69*v*. App. D, sec. 13.

[19] TS 16.339, ll. 4, 5, 13, 14⁺.

[20] Appendix D, section 42.

[21] 989: Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 3, ed. Assaf in *Tarbiz*, 9 (1938), 208. 1036–1037: ULC Or 1080 J 96. Nizāriyya: ULC Or 1080 J 42*v*, ll. 16–17. Dr. George C. Miles informs me that no silver coins of 'Azīz struck in Damascus are known. Cheese merchant: TS Box 8, f. 66*.

[22] TS 8 J 11, f. 4, bottom and verso.

[23] TS 13 J 6, f. 5*.

[24] Ibn 'Abdūn in *JA*, 224 (1934), 249, l. 15: *an lā yujriya fī 'l-balad illā sikkat al-balad.*

[25] TS 12.523 (Jan., 1090), l. 12: *naqd miṣr wa-ṣanjat miṣr.* TS 20.21 (1076): *danānīr jiyād wāzina naqd miṣr yawma'idhin.* The 1201 will: Abraham Maimuni, *Responsa,* pp. 164–165.

[26] ULC Or 1080 J 92, l. 8, *India Book* 19: *jawāz miṣr.* Cf. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon, s.v. jā'iz,* current money.

[27] Bodl. MS Heb. d 68, f. 108 (Cat. 2838, no. 30), l. 11: *jawāz al-balad.*

[28] TS 12.373*v*, l. 3: *in kān tamshī tujawwizhā lī.* For Spain, cf. *India Book* 104, margin, l. 3. For Ma'add dinars of al-Mahdiyya, see Hazard, *Numismatic History of North Africa,* pp. 52, 92.

[29] TS 20.122, l. 19, Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 20, ll. 6, 16, 18: *jawāz al-sharq.* Spain: TS 8.268, f. 10, *zehūvīm* (Heb.) *sharqiyya,* ed. E. Ashtor in *Sefarad,* 24 (1964), 74. Cf. TS 13 J 25, f. 8, l. 26⁺: *jawāz miṣr* (in Libya).

[30] Qayrawān dirhems: TS Arabic Box 53, f. 11*v*, l. 2. Sicilian quarters: TS 20.127 margin, ll. 3–4: *takhruj 'indkum. Ibid.,* l. 23*r* and often. Rūm: e.g., TS 12.229, l. 16 ff., see below.

[31] Hazard, *op. cit.* (see n. 28), p. 55.

[32] DK 14, ll. 6–10, addressed to 'Arūs b. Joseph in Fustat. Currency: *jawāz.* Cf. Hazard, *op. cit.* (see n. 28), pp. 61–62.

[33] TS Arabic Box 30, f. 2 cols. I–III. Cf. Gottheil-Worrell XXXVI, pp. 164–169*, (account that was submitted to the same merchant).

[34] TS 20.121, l. 41. This is a fragment of a huge court record originally consisting of at least four leaves pasted together. As the script and the names mentioned show, it was written in Cairo but reported happenings in Alexandria.

[35] E.g., TS Arabic Box 54, f. 15*b**, and TS NS J 198*.

[36] ULC Add. 3349, l. 4. The text is in Aramaic, but the term "old" is spelled *qydm,* i.e., Arabic *qidam.* See n. 42.

[37] TS 12.229, ll. 15–16.

[38] TS 8 J 17, f. 16, ll. 5–6.

[39] TS 16.163, l. 21*.

[40] 983: TS 16.60: a loan of 75 Mu'izz dinars. (In Heb.). 1004: TS 28.3: sale of one-third of a house for 70 dinars. 1026: TS 12.579: a loan of Mu'izziyya. Letter from Qayrawān: TS Arabic Box 53, f. 11. 1057: TS Box J 1, f. 1, col. III, l. 3 (pierced: *muthaqqaba*).

[41] TS 10 J 15, f. 25, l. 5⁺: "a purse with Mustanṣiriyya [dinars] and Mu'izziyya quarters numbering 33-¼, weighing 30 dinars exactly."

[42] TS 16.7: a purse with old (*qwdm* = *qudum*) quarters, sent from Qayrawān to Fustat. TS 13 J 16, f. 7, ll. 22–23 (ed., see Shaked, *Bibliography,* p. 125); "I received [in Jerusalem sent from Egypt] ten dinars of full weight, one-half in old (*'tq*) Sicilian quarters, and one in genuine (*ṣiḥāḥ*) dinars." Written around 1060. For the Norman *tari,* cf. Amari, *Sizilia,* II, 522–524.

[43] TS 13 J 25, f. 9, ll. 7–11⁺.

[44] TS 8 J 19, f. 23, ll. 4–11, *Nahray* 150. About the banker in charge of the exchange, Abraham, the Son of the Scholar, see below. About the difficulty of selling these coins in Jerusalem, see also Gottheil-Worrell XXVII, p. 121, ll. 31–35⁺.

[45] TS 8 J 18, f. 27, ll. 5–10⁺. Suspended: *mawqūfa.*

[46] TS 20.121 (around 1090; see n. 34). TS Arabic 30, f. 30, col. II (Nov.,

1132). For the same in Basra, Iraq, see Mez, *Renaissance*, p. 448, and for Marāgha, Iran, see M. Perlmann, "Samau'al al-Maghribī," *PAAJR*, 32 (1964), 85.

47 "Wild coins which can be traded here only with loss": *danānīr an awḥāsh mā tamshī hunā illā bi-waks:* ULC Or 1080 J 14, l. 3⁺ (a letter from Alexandria). *Piazza: Cambridge Economic History*, III, 95.

48 TS 13 J 19, f. 9*v*, cf. App. D, sec. 88; Bodl. MS Heb. b 3, f. 21 (Cat. 2806, no. 19), both being letters addressed by Faraḥ b. Isma'īl b. Faraḥ to his father. He orders *shāmiyya musaṭṭara*, i.e., coins whose legends are arranged in parallel lines, and *shāmiyya nizāriyya* (cf. above, p. 233), together with *mustanṣiriyya (wa-)nizāriyya ḍarb miṣr*. With the order he sends dinars, probably Murābiṭī dinars.

49 TS 8 J 19, f. 27⁺.

50 JNUL f. 2, ll. 6–7⁺.

51 DK 129, ed. A. Scheiber in *Tarbiz*, 32 (1963), 273–276. We find him in Ascalon in TS 12.364*v*, l. 1, *Nahray* 52.

52 TS NS Box 320, f. 17 (1158). TS NS Box 308, f. 114 (1166).

53 TS Box 8, f. 62, ll. 1–6.

54 *Ibid.*, l. 7. Addition: *wa-zā'id 9 qir. 'l-jumla.*

55 TS Arabic 54, f. 15*b**.

56 TS NS J 198 col. II, l. 4, col. I, ll. 7–8*.

57 TS Box 8, f. 62 (see n. 53), l. 21.

58 TS Box 8, f. 66*. See App. D, sec. 55, last paragraph, where one dinar is estimated as being worth approximately 54 black dirhems.

59 TS 10 J 14, f. 27, ll. 19–20.

60 Cf. above, p. 151.

61 TS Arabic Box 30, f. 184, *India Book* 137*b*.

62 TS NS J 8.

63 Cf. Schacht, *Islamic Law*, pp. 78, 148 ff. The formula in the Geniza papers: *aḥālanī 'alā . . . bi . . .*, literally: "he [the debtor] directed me for the payment of . . . to. . . ." Cf. also Grohmann, *APEL*, I, no. 48, 109, l. 7, and 116. The noun *ḥawāla* is not used in the Geniza.

64 TS 12.290, margin. Aromatic balls: *lakhālikh* (see Dozy, *Supplément*, *s.v*).

65 TS 8 J 5, f. 10, col. III. A debt of 2-⅓ dinars to be paid by the transferee in monthly installments of ½ dinar.

66 Pious foundation: TS 13 J 5, f. 2 (1085), partly quoted in Mann, I, 192 n. 1 (where the shelf mark is erroneously given as 13 J 5, f. 1). This is not a collection made for the Rabbanite Jews of Jerusalem, as explained by Mann. Solomon b. Ḥayyīm had given them a loan of 20 dinars, which debt was transferred to (read *'alayh* for *'alā*) and paid by the administrator of a house in Fustat dedicated to the poor of Jerusalem. Government: TS 13 J 20, f. 21 (al-Maḥalla, 1217).

67 JNUL f. 1, ll. 2–5⁺.

68 TS NS J 243, *India Book* 301.

69 See nn. 73 and 80.

70 Cf. Schacht, *Islamic Law*, p. 149, and its bibliography, pp. 274–275. The Hebrew Geniza texts quoted below in nn. 82–84 and 86, use *diōknē* (a word derived from Greek) for *suftaja*. About the relevant Jewish law, cf. I. Ostersetzer in *Tarbiz*, 11 (1940), 39–55.

71 Dropsie 399, ll. 13–18. The amount is not indicated.

72 TS 12.2*v*, ll. 11–13.

73 TS 8 J 19, f. 25*v*, l. 1.

74 TS 10 J 20, f. 16, ll. 3–12, *Nahray* 128. The MS clearly has 5 *dn'*, dinars, not *dr'*, dirhems, see below.

75 TS 13 J 17, f. 6, ll. 9–11. The writer: Mūsā b. Ya'qūb. Two other suftajas drawn on Ibn Sha'yā in Damascus: TS 13 J 15, f. 5, l. 5.

76 TS 13 J 18, f. 6, l. 11. Another suftaja from an Egyptian town, Tinnīs, drawn on Ibn Sha'yā: TS 13 J 25, f. 14, margin⁺.

77 TS 12.281, l. 4 ff⁺.

78 For these terms see *Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, chap. vii, sec C.

79 DK (1)⁺, p. 194.

80 MS Meunier⁺.

81 Mez, *Renaissance*, chap. 26, p. 447.

82 Mann, *Texts*, I, 143–4.

83 *Ibid.*, I, 321.

84 Mann, II, 125, 143, 146, 195. TS 10 J 4, f. 1, ll. 3–7.

85 Dropsie 411, l. 18, *Nahray* 254.

86 ENA 4020, ed J. Mann in *Tarbiz*, 6 (1935), 83, ll. 35–39. Tyre: Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 20, ll. 10–11, *Nahray* 166.

87 TS 13 J 26, f. 2, ll. 1–3. As may be concluded from the handwriting the sender probably was a Palestinian. Since the Palestinian pound was about six times as heavy as the Egyptian one, he calls the latter *ruṭayla*. The type of silk is also indicated, but not clearly legible: *gwṭy* (*ghuṭawī?*) or *gwnwy* (*jūnawī*).

88 TS Box J 2, f. 66, ll. 5–9, *Nahray* 20. Cf. also TS 8 J 21, f. 2, l. 8⁺, where another merchant-banker does the same. *Katabt* could also mean: "I had issued for me."

89 Besides bills drawn on Damascus, Jerusalem, Ramle, and Tyre, mentioned above, one received in Ascalon, Palestine, is noted: TS 10 J 5, f. 21, top, l. 2.

90 Dropsie 389, top and verso, ll. 1–2.

91 See n. 88.

92 TS 8 J 33, f. 10, sec. 3. The reading Mān·k (not: Mālik) is established by several Geniza documents; see also Cl. Cahen in *JESHO*, 7 (1964), 237.

93 TS 8 J 11, f. 9*v*.

94 Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 29, ll. 28–30.

95 TS 8 J 4, f. 25.

96 Cf. the following clause in a contract of partnership in a bank: "He [the junior partner] will not write a promissory note for anyone, be he a customer or not" (TS 12.784*).

97 TS 13 J 3, f. 2, margin⁺.

98 TS Box 8, f. 102, col. I, ll. 5–7, 12, 16, 21, 24, 27, and so on (around 1100). The three other bankers were Abū Zikrī and Abū Isḥāq Ben Ṭībān each pledging a dinar, and 'Ammār, the son of the Head of the Congregation, who donated, however, only a quarter. The latter is listed in col. III, l. 11, and referred to col. I, l. 27, and col. III, l. 1. The wording of the references: *'ind al-Ḥalabī*, "with Ḥalabī," and so on.

99 TS 8 J 5, f. 1*. Two of the notes with smaller amounts were issued by al-Ḥalabī, the banker mentioned in the previous note.

100 TS 10 J 18, f. 14, l. 15: *riqā' wa-khuṭūṭ mu'āmilīn* (around 1030).

101 TS Arabic Box 30, f. 32, col. II*.

[102] Cf. above, p. 174.

[103] TS 12.784*. See below, n. 105.

[104] TS Arabic Box 30, p. 32, col. II, l. 8*.

[105] TS 12.784*; Bodl. MS Heb. b 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 2, *India Book* 325; TS 13 J 6, f. 5*.

[106] P. Heid. 917*.

[107] DK XI*v*, ll. 15–18 (letter by Isaac Nīsābūrī to 'Ullā b. Joseph). "Went broke": *inkasar*, literally: he was broken. For *ṣayrafī* the letter has *ṣ'rfy*, which is *ṣērafī*, pronounced with imāla. The same spelling in the address of the letter Dropsie 395.

[108] TS 13 J 14, f. 4*v*, ll. 13–15⁺; TS 16.57 (Dec., 1120); TS 8 J 22, f. 30.

[109] Hebrew: TS 16.116; TS 20.60; TS 24.70 (all from the eleventh century). Arabic: TS NS J 401, no. (10). J. Goldin in *Tarbiz*, 34 (1964), 66, 67 n. 7 provides three further examples.

[110] Many letters addressed to Nahray b. Nissīm or one sent to Abu 'l-Munajjā Solomon b. Sedāqā (PSR 1453 [around 1180]).

[111] In addition to the sources mentioned in notes 59, 98, 103, 105, and 108: TS 13 J 33, f. 10 (greetings to a banker and his partner); TS 20.21 (payment to a partnership, 1076).

[112] TS 12.784*.

[113] Cf. *EI*[2] *s.v.* "Djahbadh" (W. J. Fischel).

[114] P. Heid. 917 E, l. 6* (section E is not included in the translation).

[115] Bodl. MS Heb. b 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 9*. Claude Cahen's statement, *JESHO*, 5 (1962), 250 n. 4, based on Ibn Mammātī 304, that in Egypt the *jadbadh* was a subaltern agent, has to be qualified accordingly.

[116] TS 20.92, sec. C, l. 4⁺*.

[117] TS Box K 15, f. 14*v*, col. II, l. 11: Ibrahīm *al-juhaybidh*, paying ½ (dinar in list, it seems, of partial payments of poll tax); TS 24.76, l. 39: "The wife of the jahbadh" in a list of needy people. It is not excluded that the two lists refer to the same person.

[118] Gottheil-Worrell, XXXVI, p. 164, l. 8*.

[119] TS 10 J 20, f. 16, l. 6⁺.

[120] TS 10 J 12, f. 26, ll. 7–10⁺.

[121] TS 12 281, ll. 7, 16 and margin and top of the page⁺.

[122] ULC Add. 3337.

[123] List of contributors: Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 47⁺, col. I, l. 25 and margin. Cf. Strauss, *Mamluks*, I, 178 n. 31. There are 4 ṣayrafīs in this document. In TS Box K 15, f. 43, three naqqāds contribute on one day. Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 92: the wife of a naqqād buys one-quarter of a house for 1,000 dirhems (1229). TS 10 J 7, f. 6*d*, sec. 2: a naqqād buys a slave girl for 19-½ dinars (middle of twelfth century). Whether *nāqid* is used in the same sense as *naqqād* is not evident from the Geniza material. The family of a nāqid receives four loaves of bread in a list of needy people from the end of the eleventh century: TS Box K 15, f. 102, col. I, l. 12. The family name of a physician was Ibn al-nāqid in 1143: TS 16.146, l. 3⁺.

[124] Model of an "acknowledgment," written by the famous scribe Hillel b. Eli: TS 12.583 (Oct., 1090). Payment to be entered on reverse side: TS 13 J 2, f. 15 (April, 1107); Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 11 (summer, 1145) and often. Fines: TS 13 J 4, f. 13 (a fine of 100 dirhems to be paid to the synagogue of Dammūh if a first installment of 200 dirhems is not reimbursed in time. April, 1292). See also below, n. 126.

[125] ENA 4011, f. 57 (Sunaynāt).

[126] TS 12.594*.

[127] TS 13 J 4, f. 4.

[128] TS Box K 15, f. 91, col. II, ll. 3–6*, see below, n. 207.

[129] TS 13 J 6, f. 10. Here, the Arabic acknowledgment is simply called *kitāb*, document. This beadle of the Iraqian synagogue in Fustat, Eli b. Isaac ha-Kohen, was a colorful personality, and a number of documents relating to him, dated 1099 through 1127, have been preserved.

[130] TS 18 J 1, f. 29, see Appendix D, section 71.

[131] ULC Or 1080 J 138: *ṭabīb al-uṣṭūl.* Mr. Duck: Ibn. al-Baṭṭ.

[132] PER 91. In Minyat Ziftā.

[133] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 99.

[134] TS 16.200, see Appendix D, section 74. The date of issue of the document is not preserved. The physician al-Rashīd al-Samawal, Samuel b. Japheth, was a respected notable, mentioned in other Geniza papers. *Qaṭāra* (or *quṭāra*), sugar molasses treated in a special way, *Ma'ālim al-Qurba*, vocabulary, p. 106; J. Wansbrough in *Documents from Islamic Chanceries*, ed. M. Stern (Oxford, 1965), p. 73. In TS 10 J 30, f. 15, a friend sends 5 jugs of qaṭāra, each weighing about 50 pounds. The same commodity in TS 13 J 18, f. 8*v*, l. 4; TS 13 J 30, f. 2, l. 6, and in a text lost through the destruction of the Municipal Library, Frankfort on the Main, ed. J. Horovitz, *ZfHB*, 5 (1901), 155.

[135] TS 20.116 (handwriting of Hillel b. Eli, of n. 124, above).

[136] TS 13 J 4, f. 13 (see n. 124, last item). The debtor certifies that he had examined the goods sold to him.

[137] TS 8 J 19, f. 25, l. 8, Bishr b. Dā'ūd of al-Mahdiyya to Ya'qūb b. Ibrahīm b. 'Allān.

[138] Bodl. MS Heb. f 56 (Cat. 2821), f. 45*.

[139] An *'āriya* ("borrowing") of 60 dirhems: Dropsie 388. A *salaf*, "loan": ENA 2558*v* ("March 1219").

[140] Request for 400 dirhems *'alā rahn*, "against a security": ULC Or 1080 J 81. A poor man pawns his turban, once for a loan of 30 dirhems (P. Heid. 898) and once for 40 (*ibid.*, verso).

[141] TS 12.515 ed. in Mann, *Texts*, I, 360–361. Heb. *gwzēyh* stands for Arabic *jawza*, nutmeg.

[142] TS 16.56.

[143] TS 16.60. The debt was acknowledged on Nisan 24, and was to be paid back at the end of the month of S(ivan) of the same year. The name of no other month begins with S.

[144] TS 16.124. The creditor's family name was Ben Mesayyēm and that of his representative (called by a term derived from Greek: *apotropā*) Ben Kalīlā, both Tunisian.

[145] Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 29. The left side of the document is torn away, and, of the date, only the two last numbers have been preserved. The Catalogue ascribes the document to 1128. It is, however, in the handwriting of Japheth b. David, who was active in 1020 through 1057. Besides, no Hebrew documents of this type were written in Fustat during the twelfth century. The two court records referring to the debtor's father-in-law and wife are dated January, 1028: TS 13 J 5, f. 1 and 8 J 4, f. 3. The banker was called Barhūn (which is the Tunisian form of the name Abraham) b. Sahlān, but should not be confused with Abraham b. Sahlan, the leader of the Babylo-

nian congregation in Fustat. This man, who was already dead in 1032 (see Mann, I, 97), was an honorary member of both the Jerusalem and Baghdad Jewish academies, titles which would not have been omitted in a carefully written court record such as Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 29.

[146] TS 8 J 18, f. 18. "I took a loan": *iqtaraḍt.*

[147] TS 20.127, ll. 2–3, 22, and 42–44. "Advance": *salaf.*

[148] TS 20.83. Jewish loan: *sheṭār yeziftā.*

[149] TS NS J 269.

[150] TS Arabic Box 38, f. 81.

[151] Gottheil-Worrell, XVI, p. 82.

[152] TS Arabic Box 38, f. 2. In 1010 or slightly later.

[153] Firkovitch II, 1700, f. 20. Both the original note and the postscript are in the hand of the prominent judge Mevōrākh b. Nathan.

[154] TS 16.208.

[155] TS 13 J 3, f. 21. Repayment as from the Muslim New Year (June 25, 1210).

[156] Bodl. MS Heb. b 12 (Cat. 2875), f. 8. Three other documents deal with the financial affairs of these two persons: TS 13 J 3, f. 24 (a loan of 61-½ dinars given by the nephew to the uncle to be paid in monthly installments of 5 dinars as from the Muslim New Year, which then fell on May 13, 1214); TS 16.159 (acknowledgment of the uncle to have no claims of any kind against the nephew, November 19, 1214); TS 16.89 (fragment; the uncle undertakes to return to the nephew 600 dinars by May 19, 1216, which was the end of the first month of the new Muslim year).

[157] See the two preceding notes and above, p. 208.

[158] Abraham Maimuni, *Responsa,* pp. 72–80.

[159] Maimonides, *Responsa,* I, 83–85.

[160] *Ibid.,* I, 116. See also *ibid.,* I, 104–105.

[161] TS 20.80*v*, ll. 44–49⁺.

[162] Maimonides, *Responsa,* I, 136.

[163] TS 6 J 3, f. 33*. For the Byzantine sea loan see Lopez-Raymond, *Medieval Trade,* p. 169. But cf. n. 141 and also above, p. 253.

[164] BM Or 10.126*, cf. App. D, sec. 65, p. 384, below where the somewhat complicated circumstances of the case may be studied.

[165] BM Or 10.587: *ribbīth* 12 *ifrantī* ("European money"; not: *ifranjī*).

[166] ENA 2727, f. 31.

[167] TS 13 J 11, f. 5, l. 19, Mann, II, 186. See *Med. Soc.,* Vol. II, chap. vii, sec. C. ENA 223, f. 3, l. 11, ed. Mann, II, 61.

[168] Dropsie 392. *Med. Soc., ibid.*

[169] ULC Add 3339 (c). The sum concerned was only 8 dinars.

[170] TS 13 J 18, f. 14*, written by Ḥalfōn b. Manasseh; TS Arabic Box 18(1), f. 132. In the handwriting of the judge Nathan b. Samuel at his best. Unsigned.

[171] TS 13 J 6, f. 5*; TS Arabic Box 30, f. 215, col. I, l. 15–col. II, l. 5*.

[172] Above, p. 247, and p. 462, n. 106.

[173] TS Arabic Box 6, f. 1*a* (there is also a no. 1).

[174] Cf. Siegfried Stein, "The Development of the Jewish Law of Interest from the Biblical Period to the Expulsion of the Jews from England," *Historia Judaica,* 17 (1955), 1–40, where further literature on the subject is to be found.

[175] INA D-55, f. 6. The wine, two *ṭamāwiyās,* probably cost less than 1

dinar. The ṭamāwiyā is not mentioned in Hinz, *Masse,* Grohmann, *Einführung,* and Dozy, *Supplément,* but occurs frequently in the Geniza. TS 13 J 21, f. 17, l. 35*, says that 10 ṭamāwiyās were contained in a Byzantine barrel, or *maṭar* (cf. our meter). There are several references in the Geniza to the price of a ṭamāwiyā of wine.

176 TS 13 J 2, f. 15; Mosseri A 71: *fī naqda wāḥida wa-wazn wāḥid.*

177 Above pp. 42 and 198.

178 TS 8 J 14, f. 9*.

179 TS 13 J 29, f. 1*v*, ll. 1–9.

180 TS 13 J 25, f. 1, ll. 22–25.

181 TS NS J 270*, ed. S. D. Goitein, "A Letter from Ascalon during its Occupation by the Crusaders (1153–1187)," *Tarbiz,* 31 (1963), 287–290.

182 TS 10 J 14, f. 20. TS 10 J 19, f. 20, seems to be another version of the same letter. TS NS J 145, addressed to the same person in Egypt (Yeshū'ā b. Samuel = Isma'īl Makhmūrī), this time by his nephew, states that the city (al-Mahdiyya) was "sieged by the Rūm."

183 TS NS J 430.

184 1135: Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 8*; 1156: Firkovitch II, 1700, f. 2; 1220: ULC Or 1080 J 239, below, Appendix D, sec. 72. About the prices of houses cf. *Med. Soc.,* vol. II, chap. viii, App. A.

185 TS 13 J 5, f. 1, entry B (Dec., 31, 1027); TS Arabic Box 7, f. 22; TS 16.341 (Dec., 1213).

186 TS 10 J 4, f. 15.

187 TS Arabic Box 4, f. 5*. See p. 265, above.

188 TS 10 J 26, f. 10 (summer, 1146) and above, p. 257.

189 TS Arabic Box 30, f. 215, col. I, l. 15–col. II, 1.5*.

190 TS 8 J 22, f. 30, above, p. 248.

191 TS 16.213, a letter by the *muqaddam,* or head, of Minyat Ziftā, announcing that he had excommunicated a debtor according to an instruction by the Nagid, but asked for a respite of two months for him.

192 ULC Add 3422: *kān li-bēth dīn an yuwakkil 'alayh bi-yad al-sulṭān.* In case the debtor does not pay the sum agreed upon before the Jewish court, the latter will bring him before the government. Spring, 1098. The same in ENA 4011, f. 50 (around 1145).

193 Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 2* (the Nagid Mevōrākh); TS 13 J 18, f. 25* (Samuel b. Hananiah); TS NS J 277* (same).

194 TS 24.26. The articles referring to this letter (Shaked, *Bibliography,* p. 77) deal with the Gaon's title and ancestors.

195 JNUL f. 5, ed. S. D. Goitein, *Kirjath Sepher,* 41 (1966), 111–115.

196 21-13/24 dinars: TS 13 J 32 (the whole volume consists of one document), l. 12, ed. S. Assaf in *J. Klausner Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1937), p. 228; 26 dinars: TS 13 J 37, f. 4 (1101); 26 d. (out of 80): Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 99 (1139); 11 d.: TS 13 J 31, f. 6 (1145); 30 d.: TS 10 J 7, f. 6*d,* sec. 4 (*ca.* 1159); 47 d.: TS 24.25, ll. 50 ff. (after 1164).

197 TS 13 J 3, f. 6*v**. For the payment of the poll tax in installments see *Med. Soc.,* Vol. II, chap. vii, C.

198 TS 20.31. The publications referring to this document (Shaked, *Bibliography,* p. 72) deal with the issuing authority, not the subject matter.

199 TS 13 J 1, f. 20. Written by Hillel b. Eli at his best. Unsigned. It was the copy retained by the creditor, as is proved by the reverse side, which contains accounts in the handwriting of 'Arūs.

[200] 1090: TS 12.583, also written by Hillel b. Eli; 1156: Firkovitch II, 1700, f. 16*v*, sec. B.

[201] TS 8 J 24, f. 15. A similar stipulation in a fragment from fall, 1139: a debt of 90 dirhems to be paid in weekly installments of 6 dirhems, ENA 4011, f. 43.

[202] TS Arabic Box 51, f. 107, ed. S. M. Stern, "Three Petitions of the Fāṭimid Period," *Oriens*, 15 (1962), 182–186.

[203] TS 13 J 31, f. 6, cf. n. 196. The document itself, its validation by the court, as well as the first and third entries on the back, are in the hand of the Judge Nathan b. Samuel he-ḥāvēr.

[204] TS 13 J 6, f. 11. For the Nagid David's handwriting cf. the facsimile in S. D. Goitein, "A Letter to Maimonides and New Sources regarding the Negidim from his Family," *Tarbiz*, 34 (1965), opposite p. 237.

[205] TS 24.25, containing 53 lines and marginals. The jewelry and clothing noted at the beginning of the incomplete document formed part of the marriage portion of the merchant's wife. In view of his long absence (or other reasons) she obviously had asked for a divorce.

[206] Hazard, *Numismatic History of North Africa*, pp. 138–140.

[207] TS Box K 15, f. 91*.

[208] TS NS Box 325, f. 8.

[209] TS 13 J 14, f. 4⁺.

[210] TS 13 J 5, f. 3, a statement written in a Spanish hand in the left lower corner of the page.

[211] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 9⁺*.

[212] TS 13 J 3, f. 18.

[213] TS 8 J 5, f. 1, cf. above, p. 246.

[214] Examples in Goitein, *Studies*, p. 237 n. 7.

[215] TS Arabic Box 4, f. 5*.

[216] TS 16.148*.

[217] H. R. Idrīs, "Les Zīrīdes d'Espagne," *Al-Anadalus*, 29 (1964), 115.

[218] TS 13 J 26, f. 9, ll. 22–24⁺.

[219] Assistant director of finance, *nā'ib al-nāẓir bil-Bahnasā:* TS 13 J 21, f. 18. The other details above, p. 425, nn. 1–3.

[220] *Med. Soc.*, Vol. III, chap. viii, A, 3.

## G. GOVERNMENT CONTROL OF COMMERCE

[1] TS 13 J 14, f. 9, l. 6⁺; TS 13 J 16, f. 19, ll. 5–6⁺; TS 10 J 12, f. 26, ll. 4–11⁺.

[2] TS Box K 15, f. 6: *Abu 'l-Barakāt al-mūrid* (1178); TS Arabic Box 54, f. 21: *Hiba* and *Bū Naṣr*, both mūrids, head the list; TS Box K 6, f. 177, l. 25: the sons of this Bū Naṣr; BM Or 5549, Col. III, l. 5*v;* TS Box K 6, f. 146; TS 13 J 3, f. 18 (1203); TS 13 J 7, f. 10 (letter to Abu 'l-Faḍl al-mūrid b. Tamīm). For the charge paid to the Mint see Ḥ. M. Rabeih (Rabī'), *al-Nuẓum al-Māliyya fī Miṣr zaman al-Ayyūbiyyīn* (Cairo, 1964), pp. 49–50; for the term "mūrid," Nābulusī, *Luma'*, ed. Cahen, p. 52 of the Arabic text. The verb *awrada* in the meaning of supplying the mint with gold and silver appears in TS NS J 259, l. 17.

[3] TS 16.102. This document is of course written in Arabic characters.

[4] DK 3*v*, ll. 1–3*.

[5] TS 10 J 9, f. 3, l. 8: *lā yaṣil ilayh aḥad illa 'l-ṣulṭān.*

[6] TS 13 J 27, f. 4, ll. 29–30: *mā yaqdir aḥad yabī' illā li-ṣulṭān.*

[7] *Ibid.*, l. 12: *wal-ākhar akhadhu 'l-khazāna l-ma'mūra khallad allah mulkahā.* The writer of the letter, Isaac Nīsābūrī, was a Persian Jew whose Arabic was somewhat erratic.

[8] Mastic: TS 13 J 18, f. 8, l. 36 and margin, *ubī'at al-maṣṭakā* (derived from the same Greek word as our mastic) *al-mu'āqa; 'āq* is the common term for the seizure of goods by a government. For mastic see Maimonides-Meyerhof, p. 115, no. 232. Silk: TS 10 J 10, f. 23, ll. 13–14⁺: *ḥaṣarū lil-ṣulṭān.* Byzantium: *Cambridge Economic History,* II, 94.

[9] Rabeih, *Nuẓum* (see n. 2) p. 51.

[10] TS 12.372*v: maḥṣūr.* TS 12.291 margin: *qabaḍ al-ṣulṭān.*

[11] TS 12.223, ll. 14–17⁺. The letter is addressed to Ibn 'Awkal. It is not excluded that *ṣulṭān* in this passage designates the ruler himself, that is, that the amir of Tunisia in person inspected the consignments of precious textiles and crystal ware coming from Egypt.

[12] TS 24.78, l. 54'*: *ukhidha wa-ḥubisa;* Mosseri L 86*v*, ll. 1–2, *Nahray* 244: *uṣdirat* (for classical *ṣudirat*).

[13] TS 10 J 13, f. 21: *taqtaḍī i'āqat raḥlak.*

[14] The letter to Nahray opens with good wishes for the New Year and for his impending marriage. He married in 1051–1052.

[15] ULC Or 1080 J 160, l. 19: *iqtariḍ min al-dīwān, India Book* 244.

[16] TS 10 J 14, f. 27: *lā tu'āmil al-dīwān.*

[17] TS 13 J 20, f. 5*.

[18] Steven Runciman, *Cambridge Economic History,* II, 95–96. For al-Mustanṣir and al-Ma'mūn, see p. 188, above.

[19] Above, p. 209. Cl. Cahen, "Le régime des impôts dans le Fayyūm Ayyūbide," *Arabica,* 3 (1956), 15. Qalqashandī, *Subḥ al-A'shā',* pp. 3, 471, 496. The history of this imposition is traced through Mamluk and Ottoman times in I. Ben-Zvi [*Eretz-Israel under Ottoman Rule*] (Jerusalem, 1955), p. 116 n. 5 (in Heb.).

[20] TS 8 J 27, f. 11, l. 6. App. C, sec. 27.

[21] TS 10 J 9, f. 30, l. 9: *yikūn al-mutawallī yuthbit ismuh 'ind al-ḍummān.*

[22] Above, p. 173.

[23] Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ,* I, 104–105. Mez, *Renaissance,* p. 117. Rabeih, *Nuẓum* (see n. 2), pp. 119–121.

[24] Above, p. 140.

[25] TS 13 J 26, f. 21. The letter is from the early Ayyubid period. Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ,* I, 108.

[26] *Med. Soc.,* Vol. III, chap. viii, sec. A, 3.

[27] Gottheil-Worrell, XXXVI, p. 166, ll. 32–33*.

[28] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 19, ll. 22–24. The addressee is Barhūn b. Ṣāliḥ, who often appears as Nahray b. Nissīm's senior partner, while in this letter he seems to be in a position inferior to the writer.

[29] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 3, ll. 14–15, ed. S. Assaf, *Tarbiz,* 19 (1948), 107–108: *li'ann kutub al-tujjār muta'adhdhira kathīr 'an al-majī' ilā ḥalab.*

[30] Dropsie 389, ll. 2–3.

[31] TS 8 J 27, f. 2, ll. 2–3.

[32] Dropsie 389, l. 55. Yanūnash was the chief town of a district (Idrīs, *Zirides,* pp. 453–454).

[33] Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 17.

[34] TS 12.224, where the *sayyida jalīla*, "the illustrious princess" of Tunisia, bestows *khila' wa-kiswa*, robes of honor and precious mantles, on one of the Tāhertī brothers.

[35] This important institution is discussed in *Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, chap. vii, sec. C.

[36] Nābulusī, *Luma'*, ed. Cahen, p. 128.

# CHAPTER IV: *Travel and Seafaring*

## 1. INCENTIVES FOR TRAVEL

[1] Circuit judge: Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 2*. Physicians: TS 13 J 18, f. 20; Bodl. MS Heb. f. 56, f. 126 (Cat. 2821, no. 38) (traveling to Ashmūm, Salmān, Dimyāṭ).

[2] TS 13 J 26, f. 10, ll. 25–26: *fa-taj'alhā nizāhan wa-tijāratan wa-nata-'āwanū fī rufū' al-ahl* (and let us help each other in the transport [or: upbringing?] of the family) *wa-najidū rāḥa liḥa'ḍnā ba'ḍ.*

[3] TS 12.133, ll. 12–14; TS 20.127, l. 36 (spring, 1064).

[4] TS 10 J 13, f. 10; TS 10 J 14, f. 12.

[5] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 21, *India Book* 177.

[6] DK XIII, ll. 8–9: *mā ana rajul al-baḥr;* ll. 16–17: *mā ana min ahl al-safar.*

[7] ULC Or 1080 J 42*v*, ll. 1–6.

[8] DK 14, l. 24.

[9] Brockelmann, *GAL*², II, 251.

## 2. OVERLAND TRAVEL

[1] ULC Or 1080 J 13, postscript, *Nahray* 80.

[2] TS 13 J 8, f. 5, ll. 12–14⁺.

[3] Bodl. MS Heb. b. 11, f. 22 (Cat. 2874, no. 21), *India Book* 133.

[4] DK XIX, ll. 4–5.

[5] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 57, ll. 5–7: *furriqat akthar mā fī 'l-khurj li-'ahl al-qāfila ḥatta 'l-farw wal-kisā wal-thiyāb.*

[6] INA D-55, f. 13, ll. 21–22, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz* 36, (Dec., 1966), 59–72.

[7] The sources quoted in nn. 5 and 23.

[8] ENA 4020, f. 30*.

[9] TS 10 J 15, f. 5, ll. 5–6, *Nahray* 168.

[10] Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 33, ll. 17–19⁺. This caravan had a special name: *qild*, a term originally designating caravans commuting between Mecca and its port Jedda (see Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon s.v.*).

[11] TS 12.175, l. 4*; TS 12.133, l.14⁺; ULC Or 1081 J 24, l. 13.

[12] ULC Or 1080 J 104. The calligraphic letter was addressed to Yaḥyā b. Mūsā Ibn al-Majjānī, who, like his father, was a prominent Qayrawānese merchant. Unfortunately, only a fragment has been preserved.

[13] Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 9⁺, written on Kislev, 22 (approx-

imately Dec. 1) "on the day of the setting out of the caravan" (*yawm mashyi 'l-mawsim*) (l. 4), and referring to the *next* (l. 23), as well as to the *last* caravan (l. 14) (early-eleventh century). In a letter addressed to Ibn 'Awkal sent from al-Mahdiyya in January, the writer refers to another sent by him in the *first* mawsim (TS 8.12, l. 4⁺).

[14] TS 12.133, l. 14; TS 8 J 28, f. 9, ll. 11–12.

[15] Antonin 904⁺. The letter was written on Marheshvan 8 (around Oct. 15) and refers to a preceding letter as "sent in the ships."

[16] TS 12.250, l. 15, dated Ab 20.

[17] TS 13 J 36, f. 1, ll. 2–4⁺. The reading *al-ṣayf(iyya)* is incomplete. The term *rifqa* is found also in Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 9, l. 24⁺. Both letters were written by the same Qayrawānese merchant.

[18] TS 12.435, l. 26.

[19] TS 24.78, l. 16⁺*: *lam najid ṣuḥba.*

[20] TS 13 J 6, f. 3.

[21] Pp. 211–214, above.

[22] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 41, ll. 4–5⁺: *qāfilat Barqa.*

[23] TS 16.54, l. 46, ed. Assaf, *Texts,* p. 133. The letter was written around 1140, when Tripoli was in the possession of the Bedouin princes of the Banī Maṭrūḥ.

[24] TS NS J 279, ll. 13, 15.

[25] TS NS J 373. For al-Muṭaylib, see Popper, *Egypt and Syria,* 1955, p. 47.

[26] ULC Or 1080 J 42, ll. 4–6, 13–14, 25, verso, ll. 21–22. "Protection": *ghifāra.* Peaches: *khawkh,* which has this meaning in Egypt, while in Syria plums are called thus. The letter, although written in Tyre, was addressed by an Egyptian to an Egyptian.

[27] TS 8 J 28, f. 12, ed. Mann, *Texts,* I, 141 ll. 7–10: When a caravan in which Samuel Tāhertī of Qayrawān traveled stopped at Gabes, he immediately rode ahead "because of the Sabbath" (see below). Letters destined for the Jewish academy of Baghdad were hastily copied and handed over to Muslim fellow travelers of Samuel, to be handed over to him, when he would be reached by the caravan. Thus, the caravan must have made its halt in Gabes on a Friday.

[28] TS 12.180, ll. 32–33, *Nahray* 172 (Jan.); DK 13, l. 17⁺ (Aug.).

[29] TS 12.180, ll. 12–14 (see preceding note).

[30] TS 10 J 24, f. 4*v*, l. 7, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz,* 24 (1955), 45.

[31] TS 18 J 4, f. 14, ll. 10–11⁺.

[32] TS 12.290, ll. 2–7, 16–19.

[33] TS 18 J 4, f. 24.

[34] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 57. TS 8 J 28, f. 12⁺ (see n. 27).

[35] TS 24.78, l. 23⁺*: ghifāra as in n. 26.

[36] MS Meunier, l. 15⁺.

[37] TS 20.113, l. 34, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Zion,* 17 (1952), 136–144*.

[38] Actually, this detail is found in an article by David Yellin, included by A. S. Yahuda in his *'Arāv we-Ēver* (in Heb.), (New York, 1946), p. xiii. European travelers in the East during the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries paid attention to the Jewish disability of being unable to travel on Sabbaths and reported about the troubles connected with it in their books (see W. J. Fischel, "The Region of the Persian Gulf and its Jewish Settlements in Islamic Times," *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume* (New York, 1950), pp. 225–226.

[39] TS 12.133, margin.
[40] TS 12.424, ll. 27–28, verso, ll. 14–16.
[41] A. Harkavy, *Responsa der Geonim* (Berlin, 1887), p. 146, no. 312.
[42] TS 12.180, l. 12 (see n. 28)⁺.

## 3. THE COMMERCIAL OVERLAND MAIL SERVICE

[1] R. de Roover in *Cambridge Economic History*, III, 98.

[2] My articles "The Commercial Mail Service in Medieval Islam," *JAOS*, 84 (1964), 118–123, and "Fuyūj" in *EI* ², II, 969-970, are complemented in this section by extensive additional material and new viewpoints.

[3] Mez, *Renaissance*, chap. 28, pp. 464–471.

[4] *EI* ², *s.v.* "Barīd."

[5] D. S. Margoliouth, *Catalogue of Arabic Papyri in the John Rylands Library Manchester* (Manchester, 1933), pp. 28–31. *Furāniq*, although having the form of an Arabic broken plural, is the singular. Furâniqīn: TS 12.171, l. 4⁺.

[6] I. Y. Krachkovsky, "The Earliest Arabic Document from Central Asia," *Selected Works* (in Russian), I, 182–212.

[7] Tabari, *Annales*, ed. M. J. de Goeje *et al.* (Leiden, 1883 ff.), II, 1045 l. 11.

[8] Albert Dietrich, *Arabische Briefe aus der Papyrussammlung der Hamburger Staats- und Universitäts-Bibliothek* (Hamburg, 1955), p. 55.

[9] Naẓīr Sa'dāwī, *The Post System in (!) Moslem State* (Cairo, 1953). Dr. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib of Cairo kindly drew my attention to this dissertation.

[10] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 57, ll. 10–12*.

[11] See Mez, *Renaissance*, chap. 28, p. 464.

[12] TS 8 J 24, f. 11, l. 4.

[13] Mosseri L 199, partly ed. J. Mann in *HUCA*, 3 (1926), 265. Esther 3: 13, 15, and other verses.

[14] Mosseri L 39c, l. 7; Dropsie 411, l. 8⁺, and other documents.

[15] TS 10 J 20, f. 4, ll. 2, 9.

[16] TS 12.825 (request from Yemen to secure a decision of Maimonides with regard to some communal strife); TS 28.11, ed. D. H. Baneth in *Epstein Jubilee Volume*, pp. 205–214, in particular p. 211.

[17] TS Box K 15, f. 96.

[18] TS 20.175*v*, l. 3.

[19] From Qayrawān: Bodl. MS Heb. b 13, f. 49 (Cat. 2834, no. 30), l. 4. From Almeria: TS 13 J 14, f. 1, l. 3, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz*, 24 (1955), 45, *fī yawmī hādha waṣal fayj min almariyya*. TS 10 J 24, f. 4, margin, l. 5⁺, *waṣalat al-kutub ma'a l-fayj min al-andalus*.

[20] Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 10, l. 10, ed. Mann, *Texts*, I, 143.

[21] TS 10 J 15, f. 11, l. 3, *Nahray* 16.

[22] BM Or 5542, f. 9, margin, *Nahray* 67. For the House of 'Abd, a perfumer and representative of merchants, see below, n. 47.

[23] 'Ammār ( = Ḥayyīm, Life): Mosseri L 52, l. 3⁺, a letter to Ibn 'Awkal; Abū 'Alī: ULC Or 1080 J 264, l. 10 (around 1065); Faraj: TS 12.254, l. 3⁺.

[24] See below, n. 42.

[25] Mosseri L 199⁺. I do not possess a photostat of this letter; *hbwḥr* most probably is a misprint for *hbḥwr, ha-bāḥūr*, the young man.

[26] TS 12.262, ll. 11–13*.

[27] TS 16.7*v*, 1.5.

[28] TS 10 J 14, f. 20, l. 5.

[29] DK 15*v*, l. 6. The letter went from Fustat to Jerusalem, but the writer,

as well as the addressee, was Tunisian, wherefore fuyūj is used instead of kutubiyyīn.

[30] Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 33*v*, l. 16⁺. TS 13 J 8, f. 5, l. 3, and verso, l. 9⁺.

[31] Bodl. MS Heb. d 65, f. 10 (see above, n. 20), ll. 14, 15, 20, 25, 26, 28. The "illegible line in Arabic script," referred to in Mann, *Texts*, I, 142, reads "Arrived on Rabī' Akhir, 9, 413 = July 12, 1022."

[32] Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13*v*, l. 9*.

[33] DK XIII, l. 25.

[34] TS 13 J 18, f. 8, ll. 4, 36.

[35] Mosseri L 133, l. 8: *ma'a l-fayj al-khārij fī l-mī'ād.*

[36] TS 20.138, ll. 39–40: *wa-kull jum('a) sayyir lī kitāb.*

[37] Tyre: ULC Or 1080 J 42, l. 27, and verso, l. 12.

[38] TS Arabic Box 54, f. 93, ll. 3–4: *wa-ana fī kull yawm ithnayn unfidh lak kitābayn fi 'l-tartīb.*

[39] Bodl. MS Heb. b 13, f. 49 (Cat. 2834, no. 30), postscript: *yudfa' lil-fayj 'anhu dirham wāḥid sawā* (for the last word see Dozy, *Supplément, s.v.* This meaning of "exactly" is very common in the Geniza letters and documents).

[40] TS 10 J 15, f. 15*v*, postscript, *Nahray* 230. The forwarding note states that letters that had arrived from Tunisia for Nahray's brother-in-law would be sent separately.

[41] Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 36*v*. The bearer of this letter must have been a Muslim since it was dispatched on a Friday afternoon and was expected to reach Ramle before Monday. Its address is in Hebrew, but contains two names, which is unusual, and no indication of domicile. Thus, these persons, whose importance could be gauged from the contents of the letter (they are requested to intervene with the Muslim authorities in Ramle), must have been prominent notables known to the runner. He was given the names of two persons in case one of the two was out of town.

[42] TS 10 J 10, f. 3, l. 20⁺.

[43] TS 24.29, ll. 20, 43, ed. Mann, *Texts*, 367–370. Two different messengers might be referred to; the first, whose name is given, was Jewish.

[44] Bodl. MS Heb. b 3, f. 16 (Cat. 2805, no. 15), ll. 25–26.

[45] With a pronoun: *shelūḥēnū*, the source quoted in n. 43. Qūṣ: ULC Or 1080 J 26, l. 15, margin, top.

[46] TS 10 J 20, f. 4, l. 2. The letter is a fragment. It mentions Jerusalem and Ascalon, but the reference may be to Ramle.

[47] For 'Abd see TS 8 J 18, f. 33*v*, l. 1, and above, n. 22. He is repeatedly referred to in Nahray's correspondence.

[48] ULC Or 1080 J 176; TS 13 J 27, f. 6. See below, n. 81.

[49] TS 13 J 21, f. 12, l. 14. The letter was sent not with a fayj, but with a packer who had packed and later accompanied bales of alum going from Morocco to Spain (*ibid.*, verso, ll. 12–13).

[50] See p. 277, above.

[51] TS 16.179*.

[52] TS 13 J 19, f. 29⁺. The editor, S. Assaf in *Epstein Jubilee Volume*, pp. 187–190, makes no mention of this note, which, to be sure, is written in Arabic and not in Hebrew characters, and which he probably believed not to be connected with the contents of the letter. It is written above the address in the left upper corner of the verso and reads clearly: *waṣal mustahall shahr rabī' al-ākhir sanat iḥdā wa-'ishrīn wa-arba' mi'a.*

[53] See Appendix A.

[54] TS 13 J 17, f. 11, ll. 2–5⁺. About traveling on the Nile River on Saturdays, see above, p. 299.

[55] TS 10 J 11, f. 17. The messenger received 4 dirhems per day, a total of 28 dirhems, which, as is stated in the letter, at that time equaled 1 gold piece.

[56] DK I, l. 8⁺.

[57] ULC Or 1080 J 154⁺. The dates of both the dispatch and the receipt given here are according to the Muslim calendar.

[58] TS 10 J 9, f. 5, ll. 2–5⁺.

[59] TS 13 J 26, f. 9, ll. 1–4⁺.

[60] TS 12.218⁺.

[61] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 17, ll. 1–2, 5*.

[62] ULC Or 1080 J 70, ll. 6–7; TS 8 Ja 1, f. 4.

[63] TS 13 J 19, f. 9, ll. 2, 22.

[64] TS 8 J 18, f. 18, margin; TS 13 J 18, f. 27, ll. 24–25.

[65] *Manāqib . . . de Muḥriz*, ed. H. R. Idris (Paris, 1959), pp. 144–145, French trans. pp. 314–315; for further details about carrier pigeons see *ibid.*, p. 314 n. 106. Professor M. Canard kindly drew my attention to this source. See also Idris, *Zirides*, Index, *s.v.* "pigeons voyageurs."

[66] Al-Ḥusayn: DK 7*v;* TS 10 J 19, f. 16*v;* Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 43*v*. Ṅajā' b. al-Ḥusayn . . . : Dropsie 397*v;* TS 12. 58*v*.

[67] ULC Or 1080 J 15, *Nahray* 45 (with b. between al-Ḥusayn and al-Anṣārī); ULC Or 1080 J 78, *Nahray* 46.

[68] TS 10 J 10 f. 24, *Nahray* 48; TS 13 J 26, f. 4, *Nahray* 49; TS 12.364⁺; TS 13 J 14, f. 18, *Nahray* 54; TS 10 J 15, f. 19⁺.

[69] TS 13 J 16, f. 7⁺.

[70] TS 13 J 16, f. 4⁺.

[71] TS 8 J 19, f. 23⁺; TS 10 J 5, f. 10, *Nahray* 152.

[72] Gottheil-Worrell, XXVII, pl. xxvii, facing p. 117. The editors read (pp. 116 and 129) *Abū Zubayr* for *Abūn ibn*. Like other editors, they took no notice of the indications of the postal agencies.

[73] DK (1)⁺.

[74] Eli I b. Ezekiel I: TS 10 J 19, f. 5 (Bath of the Mice: Casanova, *Reconstruction*, p. 132); TS 13 J 27, f. 16. Israel b. Nathan-Sahlūn: TS 10 J 15, f. 6⁺; TS 10 J 15, f. 19⁺. Abūn: TS 13 J 25, f. 12; TS 12.279, *Nahray* 154. The receiver of the letter DK (1), see preceding note, is identical with that of TS 12.374, *Nahray* 222.

[75] E.g., TS 10 J 29, f. 5; 10 J 15, f. 6⁺; TS 13 J 25, f. 12; see preceding note.

[76] ULC Or 1080 J 42; TS 13 J 35, f. 2; Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 20⁺; TS 10 J 10, f. 30, *Nahray* 140; Mosseri L 39*b*, 39*c*, 39*a* (this is the correct sequence of the three letters sent from Tyre to Jerusalem).

[77] TS 13 J 14, f. 17. Mūsā (Moses) b. Jacob writing to Joseph Ibn Sha'yā, both great Jewish merchants in Old Cairo.

[78] TS 13 J 15, f. 5; 13 J 17, f. 6, the same sender and addressee as in n. 77.

[79] DK I⁺ (see p. 402, above, n. 27).

[80] TS 12.368 (*al-Numruqī*); TS 10 J 6, f. 2⁺ (the forwarding agency is different from that in TS 12.368); TS 12.246, *Nahray* 132; probably also: TS 13 J 28, f. 6⁺.

[81] Moses b. Jacob: TS 13 J 17, f. 18, *Nahray* 164; Dropsie 411⁺. The forwarding agency: 'Āmir Ibn al-Ramlī. Letters to Ephraim: ULC Or 1080 J 176; TS 13 J 27, f. 6. The identity of the writer of this fragment, Eli ha-

Mumḥē b. Abraham, is established through his very characteristic hand; cf. also TS 13 J 13, f. 21, and DK 123, ed. A. Scheiber in *Tarbiz,* 32 (1963), 182–183; see Shaked, *Bibliography,* p. 349. Both the fragment and the complete letter deal with a request to help a certain Abu 'l-Faraj from Mosul. See above n. 48.

[82] TS 8 J 27 f. 19, *Nahray* 18, addressed to 'Ayyāsh b. Ṣadaqa.

[83] Tripoli: TS 10 J 15, f. 5+. Acre: TS 10 J 20, f. 9. Ramle: TS 13 J 36, f. 6. Cairo-Tyre: JNUL 2+.

[84] TS 8 J 25, f. 6+. For the Mamluk postal service Cairo-Aleppo see W. Popper, *Egypt and Syria,* 1955, pp. 47–49.

[85] Other examples of brothers: 'Alī and al-Ḥasan, sons of Ḥammād b. Muḥammad, distributing mail from Jerusalem in Old Cairo: TS 10 J 20, f. 13, *Nahray* 198; Isma'īl and Ḥasan of Old Cairo receiving mail from Ramle or Ascalon (the forwarding agent seems to have been their brother): TS 10 J 20, f. 7.

[86] The Anṣārī couriers:

Ṭāhir, the Maker of Saddle Pads

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| al-Ḥusayn, Fustat | Muḥammad, Jerusalem | Najā', Fustat |
| Najā', Fustat, Jerusalem, Tyre | son, " | Tamīm, " |
| al-Ḥusayn, " " " | | |

[87] ENA 1822, f. 55, l. 2. The content of the letter, which is addressed to Nahray b. Nissīm by his cousin Nathan b. Nahray proves that Nathan sojourned at that time in one of the ports of the Syro-Palestinian coast.

## 4. RIVER TRAFFIC

[1] TS NS J 170 (in connection with a Jewish Rayyis); DK XIX (cf. p. 474, below, n. 19); TS 8 J 16, f. 31, l. 11, and verso, l. 6 (for transport of cargo). See also below, n. 23. For literary sources about *'ushārī,* cf. Habib Zayat in *Al-Machriq,* 43 (Beirut, 1949), 351 (in Arab.), and Fahmy, *Muslim Sea-power,* p. 152. *Ṭārma:* I. Friedlaender, *Der Sprachgebranch des Maimonides,* Vol. I (Frankfurt, 1902), 70. Professor Ahmad Fakhri of Cairo University informed me about the present-day usage.

[2] *Markab* differentiated, e.g., from 'ushārī in TS 8 J 16, f. 31, ll. 9, 16, verso, l. 8. See preceding note.

[3] TS 10 J 9, f. 5, l. 10+; G. Wiet, *Cairo* (Norman, 1964), p. 63, quoting Pierre Belon.

[4] TS 13 J 19, f. 29, l. 14+ and others. Dozy, *Supplément,* I, 188*a*, knows *jarm* only from later and foreign sources. Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ,* I, 224, with reference to the year 1261, describes them as particular to the Nile and used in Damietta.

[5] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805) 17, l. 3*.

[6] "Galleys" serves here as a translation of *aqṭā'* (ULC Or 1080 J 26, l. 8), which seems to be a variant of the more common *qaṭā'ī* (cf. Dozy, *Supplément,* II, 371*b*). See above, p. 307.

[7] TS Arabic Box 42, f. 158, ed. M. S. Stern, "Three Petitions of the Fāṭimid Period," *Oriens*, 15 (1962), 174–178.

[8] TS 12.566, l. 3, going from Old Cairo to Rosetta; Gottheil-Worrell, XII, p. 62, l. 9, between Old Cairo and Alexandria; ULC Or 1080 J 37, l. 10, *Nahray* 98, it seems, between Rosetta and Alexandria; TS 8 J 27, f. 2, l. 10⁺. The plural, *khīṭiyya* (spelled *kyṭy'*) in TS 13 J 19, f. 29, l. 5⁺. The editors did not recognize the word, but the readings are certain. Catching a boat with a khīṭī: TS 12.388, l. 8, *Nahray* 109. The word appears in the form *khīṭiyya* in the lists of ships in Muqaddasi, p. 32, and A. Mez, *Abulḳāsim, ein bagdader Sittenbild* (Heidelberg, 1902), p. 107. The meaning "a tall, slender woman" in Mez, *ibid.*, p. lxiii. Ya'qūbī, in his *Geography*, written in 891, ed. M. S. de Goeje (Leiden, 1892), p. 150, speaks about "*khīṭiyya* ships" built in Ubulla (in Iraq, on the Persian gulf) and going as far as China. But the other quotations given by Habib Zayat, *op. cit.* (see n. 1), p. 333, show that in Iraq, too, the *khīṭiyya* was used as a riverboat. The pronunciation *khayṭiyya* (Fahmy, *Muslim Sea-power*, p. 159) cannot be maintained, as in some Geniza records the word is spelled *kṭyh*, without *y* between *k* and *ṭ*.

[9] E.g., *shākha* (or *shāka*), a boat used for the transport of flax from Būṣīr to Old Cairo around the middle of the eleventh century: TS 8 J 19, f. 25*v*, l. 14.

[10] E. Zechlin, *Maritime Weltgeschichte* (Hamburg, 1947), pp. 285–286.

[11] Fahmy, *Muslim Sea-power*, pp. 45–50.

[12] ULC Or 1080 J 35.

[13] See Author's Note, p. xviii.

[14] TS 8 J 19, f. 9, l. 14, *Nahray* 55.

[15] "He endured great hardship on the *yam* (Heb.)": TS 13 J 20, f. 13, ed. *Mann*, II, 108 ll. 8–10, must be translated "on the Nile," and not "on the sea" (*ibid.*, I, 101), for the traveler concerned proceeded from Old Cairo to Ṣahrajt, a town on the eastern arm of the Nile. "The salty sea" (*al-baḥr al-māliḥ*): ENA 1822, f. 7, l. 21.

[16] Lane, *Modern Egyptians*, chap. xiv, pp. 337–338.

[17] "Nothing had happened to us while on board ship": TS 13 J 26, f. 7 (going on land in Sammanūd). "Trustworthy" boat: TS 12.391.

[18] Goods fallen into the Nile: TS 10 J 18, f. 16, l. 10, *Nahray* 113: a pitcher (*fuqqā'a*) with honey; TS 8.28, l. 3, *Nahray* 145: the equipment (*al-'udda*); DK 3, l. 4*: everything arrived safely.

[19] DK XIX. "The royal riverboats" translates *al-'ushāriyyāt al-sa'īda*, literally: the auspicious.

[20] TS 13 J 22, f. 23, ll. 5–6.

[21] TS 13 J 13, f. 10, ll. 7–9, *India Book* 125.

[22] TS 13 J 13, f. 12, ll. 7–10, *India Book* 97: *al-markab . . . inkasar 'alā shābūr.*

[23] TS 13 J 21, f. 27, ll. 5–10.

[24] There is a hole here in the manuscript, perhaps to be complemented *n(sīr ma'a 'l-rī)ḥ ayyām*, "driven by the wind for several days." On sea (and the Nile was a "sea," see above n. 15) Jews traveled on Saturday, of course (see above, p. 299).

[25] TS 10 J 19, f. 26, ll. 4–15.

[26] Ibn Jubayr, pp. 60 ff. See *EI* ², *s.v.* "Akhmīm" (G. Wiet).

[27] TS NS Box 321, f. 1.

[28] ULC Or 1080 J 26, see n. 6, above.

[29] TS 13 J 19, f. 17⁺.

[30] H. S. Bell and W. A. Crum, "The Aphroditopapyri," *Der Islam*, 2 (1911), 280–281, no. 1353.

[31] Maqrīzī, Khiṭaṭ, ed. G. Wiet (Cairo 1911), III, 167.

[32] E.g., TS 12.335; Bodl. MS Heb. d 47, f. 62, l. 5. See also above, n. 4.

[33] Above, pp. 289 ff.

[34] ENA 1822, f. 69.

[35] TS 13 J 21, f. 14, l. 13; TS NS J 289; TS NS J 295: "We passed Saturday in Qalyūb, then took a boat to Alexandria."

[36] TS 13 J 16, f. 10, ll. 15–17. Bandits: *quṭṭāʿ al-ṭarīq*.

[37] DK (4), analyzed by S. D. Goitein in *Epstein Jubilee Volume*, p. 204.

[38] TS 13 J 15, f. 7, ll. 24–26. I suspected first that *sayf*, "sword," was the name of an implement of the Nile boat, like *sukkān*, "rudder." But my queries were answered in the negative.

[39] TS 13 J 17, f. 23, ll. 12–14.

[40] TS Arabic Box 42, f. 158⁺, see n. 7, above.

[41] TS 13 J 15, f. 2, l. 11.

[42] TS 10 J 9, f. 21⁺. The port of Cairo is called here *al-Maqṣ*. The Tunisians often interchanged *ṣ* and *s*.

[43] The officials collecting tax arrears cashed fines, which constituted their personal income; details in *Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, chap. vii.

[44] TS 13 J 16, f. 10, ll. 5–17.

[45] TS 13 J 16, f. 2*v*, l. 2.

[46] TS Box 28, f. 288, ll. 7–8, *Nahray* 99.

## 5. SEAFARING: ITS ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

[1] TS 10 J 31, f. 13. A merchant from Trapani in TS 6 J 3, f. 33*.

[2] TS 20.133, ll. 23–30. Maimonides corresponded with scholars in various towns of southern France, such as Montpellier, Lunel, and Narbonne. These places would hardly have been called "a distant country," a term more appropriate at that time for northern France or even England. But no responsa of Maimonides addressed to those countries have been preserved.

[3] ULC Or 1080 J 258*v*, margin.

[4] Bodl. MS Heb. d 74, f. 41, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz*, 24 (1955), 137, *India Book* 104.

[5] TS 20.69, ll. 4–6, 12.

[6] TS 12.366, l. 8 and top; verso, l. 5.

[7] Dropsie 389, ll. 4–5, 28, 53, 64, 66.

[8] TS 10 J 9, f. 3, ll. 9–10.

[9] JTS Misc. 13; TS 12.335, l. 5.

[10] ULC Or 1080 J 79, l. 21⁺: *baʿd inḥidār al-nās*.

[11] TS 13 J 22, f. 30, ll. 5–19 and verso, ll. 14–15. About the writer of the letter, Isaac Nīsābūrī, see above, p. 153.

[12] Mosseri L 161, l. 7 from bottom.

[13] ENA 2738, f. 7. "Monopolized" translates *iḥtaramū* (not: *iḥtabasu*) *aṣḥābnā jamīʿ mā jāʾ fīhā*.

[14] TS 10 J 14, f. 20 (from Tunisia to Egypt); Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 42 (from Tunisia or Sicily). Instead of *balligh tu'jar*, a Spanish Jew writing in Fez (TS 12.435) uses the more elegant *balligh tusaddā*.

[15] Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 56: *amāna mu'addāt* (Arab.), *emūnā ōmen* (Heb.). TS 13 J 17, f. 1, *Nahray* 107: *amāna muwaṣṣala*. (These letters were sent inside Egypt.) I. Goldziher's study "Formules dans les lettres de Gueniza," *REJ*, 55 (1908), 54–57, was based on limited material.

[16] TS 10 J 11, f. 22*v*: *balligh al-amāna tarbaḥ al-salāma*. Related to the Talmudic saying: "A man on an errand for a good cause will not be harmed," *shelūḥē miṣvā ēnām nizzōqīn*.

[17] Duplicates and triplicates have been found mainly from correspondence of the India trade. An example of a duplicate of communal correspondence is preserved in TS 10 J 12, f. 22, which is an almost literal replica of Westminster, College Frag. Cairens. 25, ed. in part in Mann, II, 356, a letter on behalf of people seeking healing in the hot springs of Tiberias.

[18] P. 163, above; TS 13 J 28, f. 11, ll. 14–17⁺.

[19] TS 8 J 18, f. 8, l. 11.

[20] Letters from Sicily and forwarded from Alexandria: INA D-55, no. 14; DK 22⁺; TS 10 J 10, f. 25*v*⁺. From al-Mahdiyya: Bodl. MS Heb. b 13, f. 49 (Cat. 2834, no. 30).

[21] ULC Or 1080 J 169, top, *Nahray* 29.

## 6. TYPES OF VESSELS

[1] TS 8 J 27, f. 2, ll. 14–15⁺.

[2] TS 16.163, l. 14 and verso, ll. 8–9*. The barge of this man, Mufaḍḍal al-Ḥaifī, is repeatedly mentioned in the Geniza letters.

[3] E.g., Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 64*a*, l. 2*; Dropsie 389, l. 19. For the Greek and Latin equivalents of *qārib* see Dozy, *Supplément*, II, 323*a*.

[4] ULC Or 1080 J 36, l. 15, *Nahray* 178.

[5] ENA 151 (2557)*.

[6] TS 13 J 26, f. 9*v*, ll. 1–3⁺. "Uncovered": *makshūfa*.

[7] TS 20.69, ll. 4–6, 12. East-West: Bodl. MS Heb. d 74, f. 41⁺. West-East: Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 52, ll. 21–22; TS 13 J 17, f. 11, l. 21⁺.

[8] TS 13 J 16, f. 19, l. 16⁺. The "maidservant": TS 16.54, l. 58⁺.

[9] Professor Lionel Casson kindly drew my attention to the function of the qārib as a service boat.

[10] "The small and the large ship": Bodl. MS Heb. a 3, f. 13, l. 38*; TS 8 J 19, f. 25, l. 10.

[11] TS 16.13, ll. 10, 23, verso, ll. 7–10; TS 16.163, l. 14*; TS 16.263, ll. 11 and 14; TS Box J 1, f. 54, col. IV, l. 21; Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 17, l. 4 and verso, l. 1. *Nahray, passim. See* also below, p. 331, where in each group of a convoy one *qunbār* is sailing. For the Greek and Latin equivalents, see C. D. Du Cange, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae graecitatis* (Leiden, 1943, reprint) and *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae latinitatis* (Paris, 1678), *s.v.* "kombarion" and "cumba." The word might indeed be Semitic. The Phoenicians possessed a type of boat called *kumba* (rendered as *kymbe* in Greek).

[12] Traveling in a *ghurāb:* TS 16.13*v*, ll. 7–11. TS 12.386*v*, ll. 7–8, *Nahray*

143: "Sheikh Abū 'Abdallah b. al-Ba'bā' arrived in Alexandria (from Tunisia) in a ghurāb and I do not know whether he is fleeing to save his life or is an ordinary traveler." Sending a shipment with the captain of a ghurāb: TS 13 J 25, l. 19, l. 16+. Eugene E. Byrne, *Genoese Shipping in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass., 1930), p. 6, remarks that galleys were less costly than sailing ships. This refers, however, to the construction costs as compared with those of the large sailing ships in use by the Genoese after the period considered here, not to the cost of operation.

Arabic writers sometimes made puns on the word *ghurāb*, taking it as "raven" (cf. Habib Zayat, *Al-Machriq*, 43 [1949], 354): "The *black* 'raven' with the *white* sail makes *yellow* the [faces of the] *blue*[-eyed, i.e., European] enemy" (Ibn Mammātī, *Qawānīn al-Dawāwīn*, p. 340, quoted by Zayat, p. 347, l. 1). This does not prove, however, that the word designating the type of galley called ghurāb *originally* had that meaning.

It seems there is no connection between ghurāb and the English *corvette*, which is derived from Latin *corbis* (basket), but, like ghurāb, was mistaken as a diminutive of corvus (crow, raven).

[13] The barge making the journey from Alexandria to Almeria, Spain, in 65 days—in 1130 approximately (p. 325, above)—is called *shakhtūr;* the plural *shakhāṭir* (with *ṭ* and short *i*) occurs around 1050, designating passenger boats arriving in al-Mahdiyya: Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13, l. 49*. The word is in use up to the present day for a coastal craft.

Another common type was the *khinzīra,* attested for Sicily, Tunisia, Tripoli, and Egypt. A Tunisian khinzīra once is mentioned as sailing on the Nile. The word means "hub, or nave of a wheel," a rather strange designation for a ship. With this, however, the nickname of a ship, *duwwāma* ("whipping-top"), might be compared: TS 8 J 21, f. 29, 1. 5; TS 13 J 20, f. 19*v*, ll. 1–2, *Nahray* 174; TS Box 28, f. 228, ll. 4 and 17+, and elsewhere. (*Khinzīr*—without *a*—means "pig" and was used in Syria also as the name of a fish.)

*Hajm,* normally designating a large drinking bowl, was the name for a type of ship on the route between Sicily and Egypt, a name appropriate for a ship with a round hull: TS 12.372, l. 20. Another type, used on the same route, was called *qarrāba,* meaning box, chest (cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, II, 323*a*). Perhaps it was similar to the East Roman *dromon,* which was "a blunt ship with angular rather than smoothly flowing lines" (cf. Lionel Casson, *The Ancient Mariners* [New York, 1959], p. 243, and the photograph of the model made by R. H. Dolley of the British Museum, *ibid*., opposite p. 219).

In addition to ghurāb, the war galley was also called *shīnī,* a synonym according to Ibn Mammātī (cf. preceding note). In the Geniza shīnī is reserved for warships; *aṣḥāb al-shawānī* means "pirates" or raiders. Bodl. MS Heb. b 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 15, ll. 18 and 27–28, *India Book* 79.

For the Spanish Hebrew poets referred to, cf. H. Schirmann, *Hebrew Poetry in Spain and Provence* (Jerusalem, 1954), I, 82 (Samuel ha-Nagid, d. 1056), 502, 505, 508 (Judah ha-Levi, d. 1141). Judah al-Ḥarīzī, *Taḥkemōnī,* no. 38 (written around 1216). In P. de Lagarde's edition (Hannover, 1924), p. 146, l. 11, *qᵉlā'īm* is to be read for *sᵉlā'īm* (cf. *ibid*., ll. 22–23).

[14] TS 13 J 28, f. 17; "Travel either in a caravan or in a merchantman"—spelled *markab dujjār, t* becoming *d*, under the influence of the voiced consonants that precede and follow it. "Warship": *al-ḥarbī* (thus without *al-markab*) Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 26, l. 55*; *markab* (without *al*)

*al-ḥarbī,* TS 16.244, l. 21. Cf. Fahmy, *Muslim Sea-power,* p. 129 and *passim.* In both cases, one referring to the year 1037-1038 and the other to around 1110, al-ḥarbī carried consignments. Or might al-ḥarbī designate a Christian coming from a non-Muslim country and his ship?

[15] TS 13 J 17, f. 3, ll. 10–13.

[16] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 15*v*, l. 12.

[17] Dropsie 389, ll. 35–38.

[18] Bodl. MS Heb. b 13, f. 49 (Cat. 2843, no. 30), l. 39. Additional details about usṭūl are found in the *Nahray* papers. The plural *asaṭīl* occurs, e.g., in the description of the Fatimid naval base of Cairo, quoted by Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ,* I, 480.

[19] TS 13 J 19, f. 27*v*, l. 6⁺.

[20] Bodl. MS Heb, c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 60, l. 17, *India Book* 136. The same Almoravid commander raided Sicily in 1122–1123 (Amari, *Musulmani di Sicilia,* III, 385).

[21] TS 13 J 27, f. 17, l. 10, ed. S. D. Goitein in *G. Levi Della Vida Jubilee Volume* (Rome, 1956), I, 404.

[22] Bodl. MS Heb. b 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 15, l. 28⁺.

[23] ULC Or 1081 J 27, ed. in Goitein, *Levi Della Vida* (n. 21, above), p. 402. A vivid account of the ancient technique of ramming is found in Lionel Casson, *The Ancient Mariners* (New York, 1959), pp. 100–101.

[24] TS 8 J 24, f. 21*.

[25] TS NS J 198, col. II, bottom*.

[26] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 17, ll. 53 and 56*.

[27] See Goitein, *Levi Della Vida* (n. 21, above), p. 397. For Spanish shipyards, see César E. Dubler, *Über das Wirtschaftsleben auf der Iberischen* Halbinsel (Geneva and Zurich, 1943), p. 63. One of the seven "state" Nile boats of the Fatimid caliphs was called "the Sicilian" because it was built by a Sicilian carpenter who was one of the masters of the Fatimid shipyard (cf. Habib Zayat, *Al-Machriq* [p. 473 n. 1, above], p. 352 n. 2 [quoting a manuscript]). "The new ship of the sultan": TS 13 J 15, f. 20, l. 31, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz,* 24 (1955), 43.

## 7. THE ORGANIZATION OF SHIPPING

[1] E. H. Byrne, *Genoese Shipping in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass., 1930), chap. iv. W. Ashburner, *The Rhodian Sea-law* (Oxford, 1909), Introduction, pp. clxiii–clxvi.

[2] TS 10 J 11, f. 23, ll. 2–4: "Its proprietors are Ṭāhir and his partner." Ṭāhir is common both as a Muslim and as a Jewish name.

[3] Bodl. MS Heb. d. 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 15, l. 22 (1022–1023); TS 20.69, l. 6 (1048); TS Box J 1, f. 54*d*, l. 23.

[4] ULC Or 1080 J 36, l. 15⁺.

[5] TS 18 J 4, f. 6, ll. 9, 22, 25. The text is not completely intelligible. The Arabic of the writer, the Persian Jew Isaac Nisābūrī, repeatedly referred to in this book, is here particularly faltering.

[6] TS 20.69, ll. 28–29.

[7] "The barge of Ibn ʿAllān," about which rumors had been spread that it had foundered according to TS 20.76*v*, l. 4, might have been identical with this vessel, but there is no certainty in this matter.

[8] Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 17, ll. 7–8.

[9] Ibn Maymūn's ship in Almeria: TS 13 J 14, f. 21, margin⁺. The ships of this *qā'id* and the Sultan sailing together: TS 12.290, ll. 2–9, and S. D. Goitein in *PAAJR*, 28 (1959), 51–52. This qā'id's ship is actually mentioned together with Bougie in *JTS* Geniza Misc. 13. Pisa, 1133: Schaube, *Handelsgeschichte*, p. 277.

[10] E.g., TS 16.163, l. 13 and verso, l. 20*; TS 13 J 25, f. 9⁺. Sultan Mu'izz in TS 8 J 27, f. 2, ll. 13 and 17⁺.

[11] Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13, ll. 39–40*; *ibid.*, c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 6, l. 7⁺. The captain of the ship of this princess seems to have been a brother of the captain of the ship of the sultan. Dr. H. R. Idris informs me that the title al-Sayyida was given more frequently to Umm Mallāl. See also Idris, Zirides, pp. 141–143.

[12] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 20, l. 9; TS 13 J 14, f. 2, l. 19⁺, called here al-Ḥamdānī; *inter alia*, iron—a rare commodity—was carried in this ship. For Nāṣir's times, cf. Lane-Pool, *History of Egypt*, pp. 145–150.

[13] TS 13 J 26, f. 8, ll. 13–22, where the ships of the two brothers are mentioned together.

[14] TS 12.335*v*, ll. 13–14; ENA 2727, f. 38; often in *Nahray*. Their ships were among the ten of which it was reported that they carried 500 passengers each (see above, p. 315). For the economic role of the Patriarch of Alexandria see George R. Monks, "The Church of Alexandria and the City's Economic Life in the Sixth Century," *Speculum*, 28 (1953), 356–362.

[15] Tanṣāwī: TS 8 J 16, f. 31, ll. 9, 16 and verso, l. 8; TS 20.180, l. 24⁺. Sharyānī: TS 10 J 4, f. 2, l. 7⁺; TS 16.13*v*, l. 13; TS 16.163, l. 24*; TS 16.263, l. 15. Lakkī, Uthmān, and Ḥusain (most probably Muslims—although these names were occasionally borne by Jews): Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 15, ll. 12 and 17, and *Nahray*, *passim*.

[16] The names of the Christian shipowners: Zakkūr, transporting flax on the Nile from Būṣīr to Fustat (TS 8 J 18, f. 21, l. 4); Maymūn, commuting between Alexandria and al-Mahdiyya (Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 [Cat. 2805], f. 19, l. 12). Both around 1040.

[17] TS 18 J 1, f. 10, l. 7, ed. N. Golb, *JSS*, 20 (1958), 41–42, where *yata'allaq* should be translated not as "belonging to," but as "connected with," probably meaning that the Jewish notable mentioned had a share in that boat (dated 1072); TS 18 J 4, f. 6, see p. 309 above; University Museum, Philadelphia, E 16522: a Jew from Alexandria, whose boat, on its way to Cyprus, was driven to Tarsus: cf. S. D. Goitein, *JQR*, 49 (1958), 50 n. 42. Benjamin of Tudela reports (around 1170) that the Jews of Tyre possessed seafaring ships; ed. L. Gruenhut and M. N. Adler (Frankfort on the Main, 1904), pp. 27–28. Ibn 'Allān: above, p. 309; Ibn Yūnus, Ibn Shiblūn, and Mufaḍḍal: TS 16.163* and other letters. Cairene Jews called *nākhudā*, shipowners, earned this Persian title while active in the countries of the Indian Ocean, not in the Mediterranean: TS Box K 6, f. 44, l. 11 (as a family name, dated 1247); Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 47, l. 2⁺. For a humorous account of how the Sabbath interfered with navigation during a storm see Goitein, *Jews and Arabs*, p. 108.

[18] TS 13 J 19, f. 27, l. 11⁺.

[19] TS 13 J 17, f. 11, ll. 4–14⁺.

[20] TS 8 J 18, f. 14, l. 7; 16.163*v*, ll. 6–7*; TS 12.335*v*, l. 10, and often.

[21] *Qārib Abu 'l-Ward ra'īsuh Hajjās* ("whose captain was Hajjās"): TS 13 J 16, f. 19, l. 16+; *markab al-ṣulṭān alma'rūf bi-'Abū(!) Dhahab:* TS 8 J 28, f. 9, l. 3.

[22] *Al-mubārak:* TS 13 J 29, f. 1, l. 20. *Al-maymūn:* TS Box J 1, f. 54*d*, l. 27. *Al-muwaffaq:* Bodl. MS Heb. f 103, f. 39, l. 7, *India Book* 194. Al-Malik al-Afḍal: p. 474, above, n. 19. The "auspicious," *sa'īd*, battleship, *usṭūl:* TS 20.145, l. 3.

[23] Washtub, *qārib al-ijjāna:* TS 16.7*v*, l. 25. Spinning top, *al-duwwāma:* above, p. 477, n. 13. Bride, *al-'arūs:* TS 12.124, l. 26 (written here with ṣ); TS 10 J 18, f. 19, l. 21 *Nahray* 113. Ashburner, *Rhodian Sea-law* (see n. 1, above), p. clv, notes 1189 as the first date when a Venetian ship had a name, all the others being later than 1200. All the names mentioned in this paragraph refer to the eleventh century.

[24] TS 8 J 21, f. 29, ll. 4–6: TS 12.224, l. 15; TS 10 J 10, f. 25, 1. 3+; TS 16.54, l. 31+. The manager was called *wakīl.* A vivid account of how shipowners themselves competed with each other for customers is contained in TS 8 J 19, l. 25, ll. 10–14.

[25] "Overseer": *mushrif 'alā marākib al-sulṭān,* TS 24.78+*.

[26] TS 8 J 18, f. 2, ll. 4–5; TS 10 J 15, f. 3, ll. 3–4, *India Book* 102 and 103. The captain was called *ra'īs.*

[27] TS 12.366, l. 9; TS 12.383*v*, l. 2.

[28] TS Aabic Box 42, f. 158+; TS 8 J 39, f. 12, l. 4+. A *nūtī* on a Nile boat in an Arabic papyrus: Grohmann, *World of Arabic Papyri,* p. 175, quoting PER P III/2, l. 4.

[29] For tips or "bribes" to captains and sailors, see p. 342, above. Sailors doing business: Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13*v*, l. 11*. *Bunāna:* TS 12.291, l. 10 and verso, postscript; Bodl. MS Heb. d 47, f. 62 (Cat. 2699, no. 25), l. 6. Ashburner, *Rhodian Sea-law* (see n. 1, above), pp. clxxv ff.

[30] Most easily available ship: *fī arwaj markab,* TS 12.250, l. 19. Warning of bad ship: TS 16.179, l. 41*.

## 8. ON THE HIGH SEAS

[1] TS 13 J 24, f. 8, ll. 13–18, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz,* 28 (1959), 353.

[2] TS 13 J 18, f. 4, l. 22.

[3] TS 16.215*v*, ll. 3–4, *India Book* 187, referring to Alexandria.

[4] TS 13 J 27, f. 9. Another letter by the same man to the same address and referring to the same matter, but not stating expressly that it was written on board ship: Bodl. MS Heb. c 50, f. 19.

[5] ULC Or 1080 J 35, ll. 10–11. In this case the traveler probably had also arrived in the ship concerned (see p. 296, above).

[6] TS 8 J 19, f. 12, ll. 9–10: "I am writing this letter while passing the night on the qunbār of my lord, the Amir." Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13, l. 48*: "At the time of the writing of this letter, which is the night of the overnight stay . . ." (*laylat al-mabīt*). TS 13 J 23, f. 2*v*, l. 1, *Nahray* 199: "I received your letter while passing the night on the sea (*laylat mabītī fi l-baḥr*) and was therefore unable to act according to your instructions, but I informed the family." A more general term was "the night before sailing" (*laylat al-'iqlā'*): TS 16.244, l. 9.

[7] ULC Or 1080 J 258. This slightly modifies my statement in "The Biography of Rabbi Judah Ha-Levi in the Light of the Cairo Geniza Documents," *PAAJR*, 28 (1959), 55.

[8] Ibn Jubayr 344, ll. 4–9.

[9] ULC Or 1080 J 17, ll. 6–13⁺.

[10] TS 10 J 10, f. 14, ll. 9–15.

[11] Cf. Fr. Hirth, *Die Laender des Islams nach Chinesischen Quellen*, quoted by Mez, *Renaissance*, chap. 29, p. 473.

[12] TS 12.114, l. 20, ed. Assaf, *Texts*, p. 136; TS 16.54, l. 33⁺.

[13] DK XI, ll. 8–29. This letter dates from the beginning of the twelfth century.

[14] ENA 2727 b, f. 38, Isma'īl b. Faraḥ writing to his son Faraḥ.

[15] The compartment, *bilīj*, was separated from others by mats, and contained also at least a part of the traveler's cargo. The *ṭārma* (p. 295, above), has not yet been found in a Geniza paper.

[16] TS 13 f 29, f. 1, l. 21; Dropsie 389*v*, l. 52.

[17] DK XI, l. 23.

[18] Dropsie 383, margin.

[19] TS 16.54, l. 32⁺. The manuscript is damaged at that line, with one word (probably *kemō*) missing, but the meaning of the sentence is certain.

[20] TS 13 J 17, f. 3, l. 11⁺; TS 24.78, ll. 49–52⁺*. Maqrīzī, I, 45, ll. 1–2 (*ka'k*, the dried bread of the peasants).

[21] BM Or 5542, f. 15, l. 10⁺. In TS 24.29, l. 30⁺, instead of: "(five dinars for) *provisions*," as suggested by the editor, certainly the equivalent of "*expenses*" (including the fare and the fees to be paid to the government) was written on the effaced part of the manuscript.

[22] Details in *Tarbiz*, 28 (1959), 345.

[23] Goitein, *Studies*, pp. 251–252.

[24] TS 13 J 26 f. 18, l. 26: *waqt infitāḥ al-baḥr*. The letter was written in Ramle.

[25] TS Box 8, f. 103, l. 2 and *passim: ba'd iqlā' al-marākib* (Sicily, 1064). Antonin 1105, l. 7: *qad sāfarat al-marākib* (Spain), ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz*, 35 (1966), 275.

[26] DK 22, l. 4⁺, where *fī 'l-shitā'* is to be translated by "last winter," as opposed to *fī hādha 'l-'ām*, "this year," l. 11. One letter (TS 16.13), sent from Palermo to Egypt, is dated Kislev 1st, which, during the years 1041–1060, fell six times in October and fourteen times in November. The letter certainly was sent by boat to Tunisia and from there by courier to Egypt. In a highly stylized letter the ships arriving in winter (but still before the couriers) are called *alwāḥ mushattiya*, "winterly bottoms": TS 10 J 9, f. 26, l. 4, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz*, 34 (1965), 166.

[27] Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 23, l. 49.

[28] TS 10 J 16, f. 10, *Nahray* 156: "setting out for everywhere and also for Tinnīs."

[29] ULC Or 1080 J 258; TS 12.290, l. 11.

[30] TS 13 J 19, f. 20, l. 8 and top⁺.

[31] TS 13 J 22, f. 30, l. 14, cf. above, p. 303; TS 10 J 32, f. 10, l. 5⁺; TS 8 J 18, f. 27, margin⁺; TS 10 J 15, f. 5, l. 8⁺; Bodl. MS Heb. b 3, f. 23 (Cat. 2806, no. 21), l. 15⁺. TS 13 J 16, f. 19⁺ reports that, on the twentieth day after the Feast of the Cross, the wind was still blowing from the east (which was a disaster for ships scheduled to sail from Alexandria to Tyre, Lebanon). TS

13 J 23, f. 18, ll. 15–16: "a Ṣalibiyya convoy consisting of three ships." A modern Palestinian saying takes the Feast of the Cross as the end of the summer: *mā lak ṣēfiyyāt ba'd al-ṣalībiyyāt:* G. Dalman, *Arbeit und Sitte,* I, 90.

[32] Elul as *ākhir al-waqt,* "end of business season": TS 12.124, ll. 23–24. Dates of letters from Tunisia: Ab: TS 12.92 (tenth); TS 12.250 (twentieth); TS 12.175 ("end"). Elul: TS 20.76 (first); TS 16.163* (fifth); TS 16.7 (same); TS 12.223 (not specified); TS 10 J 14, f. 20 (fifteenth); TS 12.171 (twentieth); Bodl. MS Heb. a 2, f. 17* (same); DK 12 (twenty-third). A letter sent on Marheshvan 8th (October) (Antonin 904⁺), expressly refers to another letter "sent with the boats," i.e., it went with a caravan. The same must be assumed for other letters bearing dates referring to the winter season. In most of them reference is made to the courier bearing them (sec. 3, above).

[33] TS 10 J 10, f. 23, ll. 9–11⁺.

[34] TS 13 J 15, f. 20⁺.

[35] Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 52, ll. 21–22.

[36] Bodl. MS Heb. c 27 (Cat. 2835), f. 82, dated Elul 6th, which refers to the writer's arrival from Sicily. TS 8 J 20, f. 17, ll. 3–5, *Nahray* 103, dated Elul 5th: a traveler arriving in Alexandria in a boat from al-Mahdiyya reports that five ships had left before him for the same destination.

Most letters from Sicily, as far as they were written in autumn, are dated Elul (Aug.–Sept.). The few that are dated Tishri (Sept.–Oct.), as ULC Or 1080 J 22* and TS 12.366, were probably sent to Tunisia and from there forwarded to Egypt by couriers (cf. TS 16.13 in n. 26, above).

For the Syro-Palestinian coast, cf., e.g., above, n. 31.

[37] Mosseri L 52, l. 10⁺: *muyyila wa-uṣliḥa.*

[38] TS 13 J 17, f. 3, ll. 11–13⁺: *wa-hum yantaẓirū farāgh al-uṣṭūl wa-yarmiyūh fi 'l-baḥr.*

[39] The "legs" of the ship: TS 8 J 24, f. 21*. "Pushed into the sea," *wajadt al-marākib rumiyat fi 'l-baḥr:* TS 24.78 margin⁺*.

[40] TS 10 J 16, f. 17, ll. 4–5, 8–23, *Nahray* 37.

[41] TS 16.54, l. 50⁺. *Diwan des . . . Jehuda ha-Levi,* ed. H. Brody (Berlin, 1897), II, 169.

[42] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2, f. 17, ll. 12–13*. The meaning could also be that for half the way (from Alexandria to Barqa) the goods should be transported on camels.

[43] G. R. Monks in *Speculum,* 28 (1953), 356–360; TS 13 J 3, f. 4, l. 3⁺*.

[44] TS 10 J 19, f. 19, ll. 7–23⁺, a letter addressed to Ibn 'Awkal.

[45] Franz Rosenthal, *Ibn Khaldūn, The Muqaddimah* (New York, 1958), I, lxii.

[46] TS 12.366, l. 10; TS 13 J 26, f. 8, ll. 21, 23; very frequent in *Nahray,* e.g., TS 13 J 19, f. 27, l. 17⁺; TS 12.388⁺. The "sighted ships" (*al-marākib al-mubṣara*): BM Or 5542, f. 15, l. 9⁺; Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 17, l. 12. The names of all the observation stations noted by me recur in *Nahray.*

[47] Lately identified by me as the overseer of the sultan's ships who wrote TS 24.78⁺*.

[48] ULC Or 1080 J 178, margin, top and verso (around 1100).

[49] TS 10 J 20, f. 4, l. 5 (around 1060).

[50] *Dūdī 'alā 'ūdī.* The verse is from the poem of Samuel ha-Nagid, ed. J. Schirmann, *Hebrew Poetry in Spain* (see above, p. 477, n. 13), p. 82 l. 49.

[51] Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 31, ll. 5–8, *India Book* 99.

[52] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 52*.

[53] TS 13 J 36, f. 6.

[54] TS 8 J 19, f. 27, ll. 3–8*.

[55] The manuscript is damaged and extremely faint. I read *'nṭly'* (Greek *antlia*), "water penetrating into a ship and the pump used for drawing it out." (Cf. Samuel Krauss, *Griechische und Lateinische Lehnwörter in Talmud* . . . [Berlin, 1899], II, 71*a*; S. Fraenkel, *Die Aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen* [Leiden, 1886], pp. 65–66). So far I have not found this term in an Arabic dictionary.

[56] TS 12.241, ll. 4–11, *Nahray* 215.

[57] TS 12.114*; TS 16.54*; DK XI, cf. above, p. 481 nn. 12, 13.

[58] TS K 15, f. 68*v*, col. I, l. 22 (a young man). The recto only ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz,* 33 (1964), 182–184.

[59] TS 16.7, l. 5; TS 20.76, l. 28 (from Qayrawān), both referring to the same year; TS 13 J 19, f. 20* (from al-Mahdiyya).

[60] Al-Ghumūr, lowland, presumably one of the small islands between Tunisia and Sicily. "Nettles" translates *ḥryq* (*ḥurrayq*). I remember to have seen fellahin cutting the tender stalks of nettles and the like in early spring and eating them (and have tasted them myself). The journey described certainly was undertaken in spring.

[61] It is not evident from the wording of the letter whether this number includes the days spent on the island or not.

[62] TS 13 J 26, f. 10, ll. 13–19.

[63] For the reading and meaning of this Tunisian word see Beaussier, *Dictionnaire, s.v.*

[64] "Master of the Market," spelled here: *ṣāḥib al-ṣūq*.

[65] Coming out, namely from the sea. *Kharaj* in the meaning of landing is extremely common in the language used on the Indian Ocean. For the Mediterranean, I have met it here for the first time. The boat had landed somewhere, but not in al-Mahdiyya.

[66] Perhaps identical with Salyāṭa, a locality in the Catania province of Sicily in Arab times, which since has disappeared without leaving a trace, see Amari, *Musulmani di Sicilia,* III, 799, n. 1.

[67] Women in those days had less opportunity for travel than men. Therefore the writer emphasizes that women, too, died in that shipwreck.

[68] TS 10 J 9, f. 18. The letter is addressed to Barhūn b. Mūsā b. Barhūn Tāhertī, who died soon after 1057.

[69] TS 13 J 17, f. 2*v*, ll. 1–2*. The last word in the line is not fully preserved and seems to be *lil-manā(ra)*, "to the Pharos." There is no doubt about the meaning of the sentence since the letter is from Alexandria.

[70] TS 10 J 9, f. 3, ll. 3–4.

[71] Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 17, ll. 12–13.

[72] TS 12.335*v*, ll. 13–14.

[73] Customs dues, fare, and provisions lost: TS 10 J 16, f. 15, ll. 9–10, *India Book* 222, sent from Alexandria. Other cases in *Nahray*.

[74] Philadelphia, University Museum E 16522*; Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 9, l. 15*; *ibid.*, a 3, f. 26*v*, ll. 1, 3*; *ibid.*, c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 50, ll. 32–37.

[75] Bodl. MS Heb. d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 54.

[76] TS 12.386*v*, l. 5*. Jerusalem pilgrim: PER H 17B.

[77] Bodl. MS Heb. b 3 (Cat. 2806), f. 19, l. 8, *Nahray* 7.

[78] TS Box K 1, f. 117. Cf. the "adjuration of the sea" in W. Hoenerbach,

*Spanisch-Islamische Urkunden* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965), pp. 358–360.

[79] *Iudae Harizii Macamae,* ed. P. de Lagarde (Hannover, 1924), pp. 145–147.

[80] Data on the duration of sea voyages: 1. Bodl. MS Heb. d 74, f. 41+. 2. TS Arabic Box 54, f. 66*v*, ll. 3–8 (May 15, 1235). 3. TS 8 Ja 1, f. 5. 4. TS 13 J 17, f. 11, l. 21+. 5. TS 8 J 20, f. 2*v*, l. 6. 6. TS Box 8, f. 103*v*, l. 34. This is a huge account written in Palermo, as proved by the names of the persons mentioned in it and other details. The letter was sent to Abū Zikrī Ḥayyīm b. ʿAmmār, a notable and representative of merchants in Palermo. 7. TS 13 J 19, f. 20, l. 8+. 8. TS 13 J 28, f. 9, ll. 5–6+. 9. TS NS J 291, ll. 2–3. 10. TS 13 J 15, f. 9, l. 8, *Nahray* 61. 11. TS 12.250, l. 15+. The letter was sent on Ab 20 (late July or early August). 12. TS 10 J 9, f. 9, ll. 6–7+. 13. TS 13 J 15, f. 26, ll. 3–5. The leaking ship: *ʿamal ʿalaynā al-markab al-māʾ*. 14 = no. 3. 15. TS 16.54+. 16. ENA 151 (2557)+*. 17. TS 13 J 26, f. 10, ll. 13–19. 18. TS 10 J 20, f. 4, ll. 5–6. 19. TS 12.241+. 20. TS 13 J 36, f. 6, l. 4.

[81] Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddimah* (see n. 45, above), I, Introduction, p. lviii.

[82] I owe this observation to Dr. Lionel Casson. The reference is to the lateen sail and other innovations of the early period of maritime explorations.

[83] C. Courtois, "Remarques sur le commerce maritime en Afrique au XIe siècle," *Hommage à Georges Marçais* (Algiers, 1957), III, 55.

[84] Ibn Jubayr, p. 39, ll. 2–5; p. 36, l. 16.

## 9. PIRACY, WAR AND OTHER MAN-MADE DANGERS

[1] For the published material about piracy, cf. A. Cowley in *JQR,* 19 (1907), 250–254; Mann, II, 87–93, 240–242, 289–291, 307, 316–317, 344–345, 363–365, and Index, 394, *s.v.* Captives: Mann, *Texts,* I, 366–370; Assaf, *Texts,* 109–110 and 145 nn. 11 and 12, where further literature is indicated. Cf. also Maimonides, *Responsa,* III, 217 *s.v.* "Ransom of Captives" (Heb.).

[2] Archibald R. Lewis, *Naval Power and Trade in the Mediterranean* (Princeton, 1951), p. 204.

[3] PER H 136, ll. 5–12.

[4] *Al-Bayano 'l-Mogrib,* trans. E. Fagnan (Algiers, 1901), I, 432–433.

[5] TS 16.13*v*, ll. 22–24; Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 26*v*, l. 28*.

[6] TS 16.13*v*, l. 17: *Mahdī al-rāʾiḍ.*

[7] E.g., TS 10 J 27, f. 8, ll. 9–11, ed. Mann, II, 364; ENA 2804, ll. 21–22; ed. Mann, II, 89: "They beat them in our presence, so that we had mercy with them . . . and stood bail for them."

[8] TS 13 J 20, f. 25, l. 11, ed. Mann, II, 88.

[9] For the time being, see Goitein, *Social Services*, pp. 6, 79, 80.

[10] Mann, II, 89, l. 16.

[11] TS 13 J 14, f. 20, ll. 3–4; ed. Mann, II, 87.

[12] TS 10 J 27, f. 8, l. 6; ed. Mann, II, 364.

[13] Maimonides, *Responsa,* II, 733. The document is preserved in a late Hebrew translation, which uses *perāḥīm,* florins, for dinars.

[14] TS 12.338, l. 18 ff., ed. Mann, II, 241. Accordingly, Mann, I, 205, "the king's merchants" is to be changed into "merchants from Amalfi." Despite their evidently generous behavior, the Amalfians are called "hard masters" in the letter.

[15] TS 20.145. Only one page of the calligraphic letter is preserved. I assume the Nagid referred to was Moses b. Mevōrākh, the Gaon was Maṣliaḥ, the time around 1120, and the place, Tripoli, Lebanon.

[16] ULC Or 1081 J 27+.

[17] TS 12.372, l. 10.

[18] Dropsie 389, l. 32.

[19] TS 8 J 24, f. 21. The letter is in the evasive hand of Ibrāhīm b. Faraḥ al-Iskandarānī.

[20] Dropsie 389.

[21] Maimonides, *Responsa,* I, 138–139.

[22] TS 13 J 19, f. 29, l. 17+; *Epstein Jubilee Volume,* p. 187.

[23] Above, p. 307. In Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 23, margin, where the ships await *ṭārūs al-jadīd,* it is as yet uncertain whether the blowing of a wind or the arrival of a warship called Ṭārūs is intended (cf. Dozy, *Supplément,* II, 18, and his discussion of the evidence of the sources in *Glossaire Edrisi* [Leiden, 1866], p. 338).

[24] TS 13 J 17, f. 3, l. 11+ (a letter from Alexandria, early-eleventh century).

[25] TS 8 J 27, f. 2+; ULC Or 1080 J 167, *Nahray* 97. The information about King Faruk was provided by Professor M. El-Garh of the University of Cairo.

[26] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 17, ll. 11–12*.

[27] Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 60+. W. Ashburner, *The Rhodian Sea-law* (Oxford, 1909), p. 81; also pp. clx–clxi.

[28] TS 8 J 27, f. 2, top+.

[29] TS 10 J 5, f. 12, ll. 12–13+.

## 10. PACKING, SHIPPING, AND STORAGE

[1] TS K 3, f. 36; TS 20.122, l. 23; TS 13 J 16, f. 23, ll. 9–10 (in the two latter cases silk was carried inside a load of hides).

[2] ULC Or 1080 J 291*v,* ll. 4 ff. The term for covering is *ghfy* (or *jfy?*). In Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13, l. 42* and e 98, f. 65, l. 11, the term *jilbāb* is used instead.

[3] TS 13 J 14, f. 1*v,* ll. 5–8+; DK I, ll. 21–2+; TS 10 J 16, f. 2, ll. 26 ff.+: DK VI+.

[4] E.g., TS 12.243, l. 13+. Cf. Grohmann, *Einführung,* I, 163–164.

[5] TS 12.250, l. 5, and margin; TS 13 J 3, f. 4*; TS 13 J 27, f. 22, l. 5. A pillowcase, *mikhadda,* filled with indigo: TS 12.248, margin+.

[6] Haircloth, *misḥ:* TS 12.383, l. 11. Rugs, *ankhākh:* TS Box J 2, f. 66, col. II, l. 13+. Cf. Gaston Wiet, "Tapis Egyptiens," *Arabica,* 6 (1959), 9.

II, l. 13. Cf. Gaston Wiet, "Tapis Egyptiens," *Arabica,* 6 (1959), 9.

[7] The most common word for skin was *ziqq,* especially in Tunisia; *jirāb* and *qirba* (pl. *qirāb* or *qirābāt*), the latter for both oil and wine, were also frequent. One *jirāb* could hold 60 pounds of Syro-Palestinian indigo: TS 12.468, l. 5, dated 978, ed. Mann, *Texts,* p. 362. In a letter directed to Old Cairo, the writer asks to send him 5 empty Tunisian and 5 Syro-Palestinian oilskins (pl. *jirab*), kept in his storehouse: TS 12.248, l. 21+. Leatherbag: *mizwad.*

[8] Earthen vessels as containers of oil, soap, or vinegar: *zīr, jarra, qulla.* Three big *jirār* with kosher oil, sent from Sicily to Egypt, were enclosed in cases, *mughallafa:* TS 20.122, l. 16. The pitcher, *fuqqāʿa,* was used for such

commodities as honey or mercury. *Ẓarf:* INA D-55, no. 14*v*, ll. 3–4; TS 13 J 21, f. 12*v*, ll. 5–6.

[9] Types of baskets: *zinbīl* (containing 300–400 pounds, Westminster College, Frag. Cairens. 50*a**; Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 65*a*, ll. 5–6), *quffa*, *qafaṣ*, *salla* (all these, e.g., in TS 18 J 1, f. 10, ed. N. Golb in *JSS*, 20 [1958], 41, ll. 8, 9, 13, 14, 19). The price of the wickerwork crate is given in TS 12.250. The most likely reading is 4 dirhems. Even if we read 10, the container would have cost less than .5 percent of the commodity sent.

*Qafaṣ zajāj* is not "a bird-cage made of glass" (Golb, *ibid.*, p. 42 n. 14), but a wickerwork crate containing glass vessels.

[10] Cases of wood, *safaṭ:* e.g., TS 8.73, postscript, and 20.76*v*, l. 1. Crates for books: TS 18 J 1, f. 10, l. 15 (see preceding note); TS 13 J 20, f. 26, l. 11⁺.

[11] TS Box 25, f. 19, l. 11⁺ (saffron in paper); TS 20.180, l. 20⁺. Cf. Grohmann, *Einführung*, p. 77, and his *World of Arabic Papyri*, p. 54.

[12] TS 12.254*v*, l. 18⁺: qaṭarmīz. TS 10 J 19, f. 3, l. 6: *'ullāba.*

[13] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 11, ll. 2, 8, 19, 32, 43.

[14] TS Box J 1, f. 54.

[15] TS Box 28, f. 37.

[16] Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 19, l. 33, *India Book* 32.

[17] ENA 4020, f. 20, l. 12; Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 19 (425 pounds).

[18] ULC Or 1080 J 291; TS 12.434, ll. 28–30.

[19] Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 11, cf. n. 13.

[20] TS Box J 1, f. 54, col. IV, ll. 10–11: net weight of two *barqalūs*, 194 and 190 pounds. Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 17, l. 8, shows that 2,805 pounds of wax were packed into 12 *barqalūs*. The details about the 179 bales and two barqalūs are found in TS 13 J 17, f. 3, ll. 25–26⁺, a letter to Ibn 'Awkal.

[21] Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 17, l. 8. In an account from May 1038, TS Arabic Box 53, f. 51*v*, ll. 3–4⁺, one "Nile load" contained three "land bales," i.e., those carried on camel back. At arrival in Alexandria everything was repacked for the sea transport, *ibid.*, ll. 15, 18. The packer is called here *mukawwir*, and not, as usual, *ḥazzām*.

[22] TS 12.337, l. 27, *India Book* 73. Cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, I, 177*b*. The word used in the India trade was *ṣurra*, which in the Mediterranean usually designated a purse for coins. An exceptional case is TS 12.291 margin, which refers to a bale of tin packed in a bag or sack (cf. *ibid.*, l. 13). There, *ṣurra* is spelled with an *s*, as often in letters written by Tunisians.

[23] TS 20.76*v*, l. 3; TS 12.248, top⁺; ULC Or 1080 J 42*v*, l. 7.

[24] TS 20.76, ll. 14–16. For *rizma* as ream of paper, cf. Grohmann, *World of Arabic Papyri*, p. 57.

[25] TS 12.378. The word *ḥiml* seems to be used in the Geniza papers in the general sense of "load," "bale," without any implication of either weight or form of packing. See, however, Grohmann, *Einführung*, p. 163.

[26] Packer, *ḥazzām:* TS 8 J 19, f. 1; or *shaddād*, Gottheil-Worrell, XIV, p. 74, l. 4; *ibid.* XXXVI, p. 164, l. 4, p. 166, l. 19. Supervision of packing: TS 8 J 19, f. 25*v*, ll. 8–9; TS 8 J 16, f. 31, l. 7; and often in *Nahray*. Names in both Hebrew and Arabic: TS 13 J 3, f. 4, l. 10*. Figurative marks: TS 8 J 16, f. 31, ll. 8–10; TS Box 25, f. 19, top and margin⁺; TS 13 J 19, f. 29, l. 13⁺. Engraving on the "buttocks" of the skins: Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 20, ll. 10–11; TS 20.122, l. 4. The word *falka*, pl. *filak*, perhaps designated also a type of stopper.

[27] Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 26*v*, l. 23*; *ibid.*, l. 26; TS 13 J 17, f. 1, ll. 8–12⁺.

[28] Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 64*a*. l. 1*; TS 16.163, ll. 30–32*; TS 13 J 25, f. 8, l. 6⁺; Bodl. MS Heb. a 2 (Cat. 2805), f. 18⁺; TS 8 J 16, f. 31*v*, l. 4.

[29] TS 20.69*v*, l. 26; TS 16.163, l. 33*.

[30] "In the best of places" (*fi 'l-marākib fī aḥsan al-mawāḍi'*): TS 13 J 17, f. 3, ll. 6–7⁺. "All in the hull, none on deck" (*kullhā fī buṭūn al-marākib, lays 'alā ẓuhūrhā shay'*): TS 10 J 19 f. 19, ll. 10–11⁺. Both letters were sent to Ibn 'Awkal from Alexandria. The technical term for the bursting of a bale and the subsequent damage caused to the consignment is *harash, inharash, mahrūsh:* Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 13, l. 26, and margin, l. 14*; TS 20.76, l. 29; TS 16.163, l. 17*; 16.13, top; TS 20.122*v*, ll. 20–22; Dropsie 389*v*, l. 22; Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 61, ll. 12–13⁺; ULC Or 1080 J 291; Bodl. MS Heb. d 47, f. 62 (Cat. 2699, no. 25). "The silk was ripped open and spoiled": TS 8 J 18 f. 8, l. 19.

[31] Dropsie 389, l. 41.

[32] TS 8 J 19, f. 26, l. 9 (the name of the suspect shows that he was most probably a slave); TS 8 J 18, f. 21, l. 15 and margin.

[33] TS 12.223, l. 17.

[34] DK XV*v*, ll. 2–3.

[35] TS 12.223, l. 17; DK XV*v*, l. 2; TS Arabic Box 7, f. 18, l. 5, *India Book* 78. The term is *ḥalla, inḥalla*.

[36] BM Or 5542, f. 15, margin⁺. This setting up or arrangement of the bales in good order (*ruṣṣat al-aḥmāl*) is frequently referred to, e.g., TS 13 J 17, f. 2, l. 29⁺.

[37] TS 12.335*v*, l. 20; TS 8 J 18, f. 21, l. 6. *Khazzān:* ENA 4011, f. 52 (dated 1147).

[38] TS 13 J 17, f. 1, margin⁺. ULC Or 1080 J 36, ll. 18–20⁺.

[39] TS 16.264, fs. 5–6.

[40] *Med. Soc.*, Vol. III, chap. viii, sec. A.

## 11. COST OF TRANSPORT

[1] Gottheil-Worrell, XXXVI, pp. 164–169; the translation is entirely faulty. A revised version in *Med. People.*

[2] Cf. Fahmy, *Muslim Sea-power*, p. 49.

[3] The material about him is collected in *India Book*, chap. v, b.

[4] ULC Or 1080 J 29, l. 17; Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (2876), f. 55, l. 21. In these documents, the word has the classical form *sidra*. and not the colloquial *sidriyya*, as here.

[5] The manuscript clearly has *sf'qsyya*, i.e., currency of Sfax.

[6] The total payment in silver was 31.75 dirhems, which had a value of 22.50 qīrāṭs of gold (see l. 25 of the document). Since a dinar contained 24 qīrāṭs, the exchange rate of dinar:dirhem must have been 1:36.3.

[7] *Cambridge Economic History*. II, 94. For further details see the commentary in *Med. People.*

[8] Transit permit for one piece, "*shakhṣ*," l. 15; *shakhṣ*, pl. *shukhūṣ*, designates one piece in a consignment. Common in the India trade, not in particular for spices, but for any shipment, e.g., of cheese. This settles the questions

raised by J. Wansbrough, "Venice and Florence in the Mamluk Commercial Privileges," *BSOAS*, 28 (1965), 520 n. 94.

[9] "Guards," *maḥāris* (cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, I, 270*b*).

[10] The *whole* freight, including the main part, which was paid after arrival, was called "advance," *sulfa* (cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, I, 675*a*).

[11] This tip is invariably called "bribe," *barṭīl* in Arabic or *shōḥad* in Hebrew. Perhaps it was originally given to secure a good place for the consignments accompanying the traveler. In Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 17*v*, l. 1, a tip of 1 dinar was given for a consignment of textiles and mercury, the freight of which cost 18 dinars. In TS 16.264, l. 4, the tip for a shipment of lead was 2 dinars and its freight 16. In one case, we read that a traveler presented a skipper with two baskets of *ḥalwa*, or sweetmeat, which he had set apart for a friend at his port of destination. ULC Or 1080 J 35, l. 35.

[12] Al-Makhzūmī (see n. 28), pp. 282–283.

[13] TS Box J 1, f. 54.

[14] TS 13 J 3, f. 4*; ULC Or 1080 J 291; TS 12.434, l. 16, and verso, l. 25

[15] TS NS J 197.

[16] Dropsie 389, ll. 41 ff.

[17] TS 10 J 9, f. 3. The total cost was this:

| | |
|---|---|
| The soap | 13 dinars 23 qīrāṭs |
| 10 containers | ½ " |
| Encasing of the jugs | ¼ " |
| Filling, transport to the harbor, tips to the sailors | ¼, ⅛, 1/72 " |
| Commission | ¼, ⅛ " |
| Total (The writer's addition, not mine) | 18-¼, ⅛, 1/72 dinars |

[18] Bodl. MS Heb. d 65 (Cat. 2877), f. 17, l. 8.

[19] Tithe on foreigners, *ṭurāt* (literally: newcomers), in Sicily: Bodl. MS Heb. a 3 (Cat. 2873), f. 9, ll. 9–10⁺ and common in *Nahray*. Morocco: TS 12.435, ll. 9–19. The abolition of the tithe on foreigners: TS 10 J 12, f. 26, l. 20⁺. In order to pass as residents of Sicily and thus to escape special customs for foreigners, some Jews from the East paid the poll tax twice, in their homeland and in Sicily: TS 16.13, l. 26. Dropsie 389, ll. 17–21, contains much about attempts to conceal consignments and to evade customs. The writer of that letter had to protect himself against special impositions, however, because the governor of his hometown had rebelled against the sultan of the country. An epistle from Palermo highly praises a Spanish merchant who obtained exemption from the tithe on foreigners for many coreligionists, TS 24.6, ed. J. Mann, *JQR*, 9 (1918–1919), 175 ff.

[20] TS 13 J 28, f. 15*v*, l. 16, *India Book* 291.

[21] TS 13 J 26, f. 22, ll. 14–20*, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Eretz-Israel*, 4 (1956), 152–153.

[22] Dropsie 395, in particular l. 15. A Tunisian merchant who, around 1045, bought a quantity of rice, costing 18 dirhems, in Abū Ṣīr (Būṣīr), for his personal use, it seems, had to pay 2 dirhems customs at his arrival in Old Cairo: TS K 15, f. 53, col. III, l. 4.

[23] TS 8 J 16, f. 31, l. 14.

[24] TS 13 J 13, f. 10, l. 18⁺.

[25] J. Wansbrough in *Documents from Islamic Chanceries*, ed. S. M. Stern (Oxford, 1965), p. 63.

[26] TS 12.434, ll. 14–15, and verso, ll. 10–12.

[27] TS Box J 1, f. 54 uses *maks, adā,* and *wājib* indiscriminately.

[28] Claude Cahen, "Douanes et commerce dans les ports méditerranéens de l'Égypte médiévale d'après le *Minhadj* d'Al-Makhzūmī," *JESHO*, 7 (1964), 217–314.

## 12. ON TRAVEL IN GENERAL

[1] On *istikhāra* and related magical practices, see *Med. Soc.*, Vol. III, chap. x.

[2] TS 13 J 11, f. 4, ed. *Mann*, II, 307.

[3] Example of magical procedures before and after a journey: TS K 1, f. 121.

[4] TS 10 J 14, f. 20, ll. 6–8; TS 13 J 28, f. 15, ll. 15–19ᵛ.

[5] An ancient and typical example is the Hebrew letter TS 16.68, ll. 16 ff., ed. *Mann*, II, 24 and discussed in Mann, *Texts* I, 323 n. 1. A good example in Arabic: Bodl. MS Heb. c 28 (Cat. 2876), f. 65, ll. 16–32. Such letters were often written on vellum in large calligraphic letters: e.g., TS 20.24ᵛ (from Granada, Spain).

[6] Gottheil-Worrell, XXXI–XXXII, pp. 142–149. On Abū Sa'd Tustarī see p. 372, above.

[7] TS 20.114, ll. 31–51, ed. *Mann*, II, 273; see *ibid*., I, 219.

[8] TS 13 J 22, f. 23.

[9] For a discussion of such a relationship, see S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz*, 28 (1959), 345. The proverb: *al-rafīq qabl al-ṭarīq*.

[10] Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 367, l. 3 from bottom.

[11] S. D. Goitein in *Speculum*, 29 (1954), 196 n. 28.

[12] TS Box 8, f. 9, col. II, l. 11, described in Goitein, "Social Services," p. 82.

[13] TS 13 J 19, f. 4.

[14] DK XIII, l. 2: *waḥassana ṣaḥābatak*. The Persian phrase: *khodā hamrāh-i-shumā*. The magical procedure before a journey sought to safeguard also the well-being of the fellow traveler: TS K 1, f. 121, l. 7.

[15] TS 16.13, ll. 6–14, and verso, ll. 7 and 28. The leader sends one of the company to pay the customs for all the merchants and orders him not to sell any part of their goods. He instructs another to sell a certain commodity and to buy others for seven specified companions. It was a time of outrageous piracy and of special customs levied on foreigners in Sicily (see p. 344, above).

[16] Gottheil-Worrell, XLVII, p. 228, ll. 10–12. The editors mistook the letters *st* as Hebrew numerals and dated the letter A.H. 460 (A.D. 1067). A mere glance at the handwriting shows, however, that it must be later than 1500. In fact, the manuscript has *st* with a sign of abbreviation; Arabic *sitt(īn)*, sixty, is intended, referring most probably to the Muslim year (9)60, which began on Dec. 18, 1552. It was common to leave out the hundreds in dating.

[17] TS 16.13*v*, ll. 24 and 28. Proportional participation in losses: *qsṭ* (*taqsīṭ*).

[18] TS 8 J 20, f. 18, l. 7, *Nahray* 82; TS 10 J 9, f. 21, l. 9ᵛ; DK VI, l. 8ᵛ. Letters: TS 13 J 27, f. 9; TS 13 J 29, f. 1; TS 13 J 29, f. 10; TS 10 J 11, f. 27; TS 10 J 18, f. 21; TS 10 J 19, f. 19ᵛ, and others.

[19] Goitein, *Jemenica*, p. 155, no. 1172, where further literature is indicated.

[20] Quoted by Mez, *Renaissance*, chap. 28 at p. 462.

[21] *Med. Soc.*, Vol. IV, chap. ix, sec. A.

[22] Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 65*v*, cols. I and II. Gottheil-Worrell, XXXVI. The rate of exchange between gold and silver in the account from al-Mahdiyya was 1:33-⅓, as against 1:36-⅛ in the account from Alexandria. In the latter, the bale remained in storage for two nights, while in the former nothing is stated about the duration of the traveler's stay. The sum of 1 dirhem paid for lodging in al-Mahdiyya would also tally with that paid in Alexandria, if we assumed it was for two nights.

[23] TS 12.124, l. 7⁺.

[24] TS 8 J 18, f. 29 (cf. J. Braslavsky in *Eretz-Israel,* 3 [1954], 207 n. 7). The letter refers to Abraham Maimonides as Nagid (bearing that title 1213–1237). For *funduq al-Maḥallī,* cf., e.g., Ibn Duqmāq, IV, 90.

[25] The southern gate, leading to the town of Msaken. Since the traveler came from al-Mahdiyya, farther to the southeast, it appears that he alighted at the very first inn after entering Sūsa.

[26] TS 16.264.

[27] TS 13 J 23, f. 24, ll. 15 and 20.

[28] Quoted by E. Lévi-Provençal and G. S. Colin in *JA*, 224 (1934), 266. S. Pines, "The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity According to a New Source," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities,* Vol. II, no. 3 (Jerusalem, 1966), p. 28.

[29] DK XIX, ll. 2–4. "For two nights": *kulfat laylatain.*

[30] *Med. Soc.*, Vol. II, chap. v, secs. C and D; Goitein, "Social Services," pp. 78–79.

[31] *Med. Soc.*, Vol. IV, chap. ix.

[32] Dropsie 389*v*, l. 37.

[33] P. Heid. 913.

[34] TS 10 J 12, f. 20, margin⁺.

[35] TS NS J 3; DK 2; TS 10 J 17, f. 18. Maimonides' sister: TS 10 J 18, f. 1, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz,* 32 (1963), 188–191.

[36] DK X*, p. 143, above.

[37] TS 12.262*.

[38] Bodl. MS Heb. e 98, f. 64*a*, col. II, l. 8*; *ibid.,* d 66 (Cat. 2878), f. 21, ll. 7–9⁺.

[39] TS 13 J 19, f. 20, l. 10⁺; TS 13 J 15, f. 16, ll. 37–38, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz*, 24 (1955), 26.

[40] TS 12.386*v*, l. 3⁺; TS 13 J 14, f. 2, l. 6⁺, and often.

[41] Bodl. MS Heb. f. 103, f. 39⁺.

[42] TS 10 J 12, f. 4, ll. 14–15.

[43] TS NS J 162.

[44] Bodl. MS Heb. b 11 (Cat. 2874), f. 14, second fragment from top, ed. S. D. Goitein in *Tarbiz*, 32 (1963), 194. Since the benediction of thanksgiving was pronounced also at such times as after a grave illness, the man must have recited, in addition, verses such as Psalms 107:23–32, which showed that he thanked for safe return from travel.

## APPENDIX D: *The Exchange Rate of Gold and Silver Money*

[1] Following R. Brunschvig, *Hafsides*, II, 74, Idris, *Zirides*, p. 641, states: "Les monnaies d'or et d'argent etaient legalement independantes l'une de

l'autre." This is literally true. However, as the material presented here proves, during most of the Fatimid period, the value of silver was indicated by its relation to the standard gold dinar and not vice versa. The situation was different in Ayyubid and Mamluk times (see p. 384, above).

[2] Andrew S. Ehrenkreutz, "Studies in the Monetary History of the Near East in the Middle Ages," Part II, *JESHO*, 6 (1963), 243–277; *ibid.*, p. 244 n. 1, where further studies by the same author on the subject are indicated; Balog, "History of the Dirhem." For a recent discussion of the problem of fineness see Paul Balog, *The Coinage of the Mamlūk Sultans of Egypt and Syria* (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1964), p. 39 n. 1; George C. Miles, "Islamic Numismatics: A Progress Report," *Congresso Internazionale di Numismatica* (Rome, 1961), pp. 181–192.

[3] Ibn Muyassar, *Annales d'Egypte*, p. 2, l. 4, reports that the murder occurred on *Sunday*, 3 Jumāda I, 439 A.H. According to *Wüstenfeld-Mahler*, Vergleichungs-tabellen, ed. B. Spuler (1961), p. 10, the 3rd was a Monday. This discrepancy, however, should not induce us to doubt the accuracy of Ibn Muyassar's statement (see p. 356, above). About Abū Naṣr, Abū Sa'd's brother, see Fischel, *Jews*, p. 87.

[4] Thus, and not *'l-sfl*. Hardly identical with Hāshim b. Ja'far (Idris, *Zirides*, pp. 109–110).

[5] This term has not yet been found elsewhere. Its exact meaning remains therefore uncertain.

[6] While the general purport of the paragraph is evident, I am not sure about the translation of the words in parentheses.

[7] Precaution: *istiẓhār* (cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, II, 87). It is found in the same sense in a Hebrew letter by Sa'adya Gaon, dated 921-922, ed. S. Schechter in *JQR*, 14 (1901-1902), 61, where the editor took it however as a place-name. Cf. also TS 10 J 9, f. 3, l. 7: *tubā' 'ala 'l-ṭalab wa-stiẓhār*, "it should be sold only when demanded and with precaution."

[8] In Arabic: *thamanhā 'alā dīnār wa-niṣf* (cf. Dozy, *Supplément*, II, 106, where the examples quoted are to be translated "approximately," as here).

[9] See p. 81, above.

[10] Since *shāmī* oil is involved, perhaps the Palestinian raṭl is meant, which was about six times as heavy as the Egyptian. A quantity of about 2.5 kilogram of oil would correspond better to about 36.5 kilogram of wheat than a mere 437.5 gram.

[11] Add: D. H. Baneth in *Tarbiz*, 30 (1961), 171–172.

[12] The Andalusian signed in monumental script, although he wrote the document in his cursive hand, which is, however, identifiable through other manuscripts, where he uses the cursive also for his signature.

[13] This account differs slightly from the one given in *JQR*, 51 (1960), 38–39. At the time of the writing of that article I had at my disposal only my notes, not a transcript of the original.

[14] Because of the omission of the tens, the court record is erroneously dated 1501 (of the Era of the Documents, which would correspond to A.D. 1190). It is made out however, "under the authority of Abraham Nagid" (the son of Moses Maimonides), who assumed that title in 1213 and bore it until his death in 1237. Thus, our document must have been written either in 1220 or in 1230. Since the *mutaqaṭṭi'a* were taken out of circulation in 1225, and the other documents quoted here also precede al-Kāmil's reform, the date of 1220 is more likely or perhaps the only possible.

[15] JNUL 2⁺. TS 12.515⁺: a court record from Fustat from pre-Fatimid times, dated 967, speaks of 600 pieces of silver called *niqār, of pearl-like* appearance. With the exception of the term *niqār* the text is in Hebrew. (The word *bedōlaḥ* was translated at that time with Arabic *lu'lu'* [cf. *Jāmi' al-alfāẓ,* ed. Solomon L. Skoss (New Haven, 1936), I, 196], which reflects the Hebrew usage of the tenth century.)

[16] Dropsie 395, ll. 9–10.

[17] TS 10 J 5, f. 1.

[18] TS 12.62. Goitein, *Education,* pp. 112–113.

[19] TS 13 J 20, f. 7*.

[20] ULC Or 1080 J 130, l. 5⁺. The place of writing is not preserved. Since the writer mentions, however, his coming through al-Fuwwa, a place where the Nile branches off into a canal leading to Alexandria, the writer must have been at that time in Egypt.

[21] TS 20.121, l. 36. The word *ḍub(b)āra,* package, is normally used for a bunch of letters sent with a courier in a caravan or with a friend by boat.

[22] P. Heid. 915.

[23] Paul Balog, *The Coinage of the Mamlūk Sultans of Egypt and Syria* (New York, 1964), p. 41.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

[25] Carlo M. Cipolla, *Money, Prices and Civilization in the Mediterranean World* (Princeton, 1956), pp. 34–35.

[26] E.g., TS 16.71 (Fustat, 1084). The poverty of the couple is exemplified both in the small bridal gift and in the poor marriage portion brought in by the bride.

[27] ENA 2558, f. 3 (a fragment, dated 1141).

[28] TS 12.583 (Oct., 1090).

# INDEXES

# *Index of Geniza Texts*

*Includes the* Responsa *of Moses Maimonides and his son Abraham* *
(*See Abbreviations and Symbols, pp. xix–xxvi, above*)



* Texts edited during the printing of this volume are listed at the end of the Index.
** Chapter i, section 3, note 34, of this book. This is the key throughout.

Edited by S. D. Goitein during the printing of this volume:

BM Or 5542, f. 15; Bodl. MS Heb. d 47, f. 62 (Cat. 2699, no. 25); TS 12.223; TS 10 J 19, f. 19; TS 13 J 17, f. 3; TS 13 J 17, f. 11; TS 13 J 29, f. 2: *Tarbiz,* 36 (1967), 366–395.

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# General Index

(Owing to the frequency of their occurrence, the following have not been indexed: Alexandria, Cairo, Egypt, Fustat, Islam, Jew(ish), Judaism, Muslim, Old Cairo, Sicily, Tunisia.)

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